Tennis US Open

Rafter is still king

Stephen Bierley at Flushing Meadow



HUGE Monarch butterflies, a long-range migrant, were feeding on the late summer flowers outside the Arthur Ashe Stadium last Sunday while inside another long-distance traveller, defending champion Patrick Rafter, was proclaiming himself monarch of the US Open with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-2, 6-0 victory over his fellow Australian Mark Philippoussis.

Rafter, the No 3 seed, was immediately in the groove with his exemplary serve-and-volley game which rarely wavered all fortnight, save for his opening five-set match against Morocco's Hicham Arazi, when he was two sets down.

The unseeded Philippoussis had butterflies right enough, but the 21-year-old, who defeated Britain's Tim Henman in the fourth round, has matured out of all recognition at these championships, tightening his game and concentrating on his undoubted strengths, namely a rasping first and second serve and mighty ground-strokes.

In the second set his nerve settled and his confidence burgeoned, with Rafter appearing tired, as well he might, having played a five-set match against Pete Sampras in the previous day's semi-final. The third set was always likely to be crucial, given the insane scheduling here, with both semis played last Saturday.

Rafter, not one for emotional outbursts, slung his racket to the ground when, at 2-2, he let a 40-0 lead slip. Crucially he held and then won a vital point on the Philippoussis serve, clipping the net with his final volley winner after a thrilling rally. Philippoussis then half-volleyed into the net, and Rafter was clear at 4-2. He never looked back.

Sampras's challenge for a record-equalling 12th Grand Slam ended when he was beaten 6-7, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 by Rafter. A thigh strain suffered in the sixth game of the third set left the world's No 1 needing more shovels to get him out of a hole than Bill Clinton's lawyers.

With Roy Emerson's record on the line, the many Australians present were understandably ebullient, although Emerson conceded that Sampras, still only 27 years old, still had plenty of time to beat his record. Others are not so sure.

Australian Davis Cup captain Tony Roach was happy to see two fellow countrymen showing the Americans how it is done: "It will give tennis a huge shot in the arm in Australia, no question about that," he said. "We have a great tradition in Australia in tennis. It is just fabulous to see that situation again."

Davenport brings home title

LINDSAY Davenport (left), once fat and slow, now two stone lighter and slow, became the first American-born player to win the women's final at the US Open since Chris Evert 16 years ago, when she beat Martina Hingis in two error-strewn sets, 6-3, 7-5, *writes Kevin Mitchell at Flushing Meadow.*

Hingis was off her game early on, no doubt. She hung in at 5-3 when Davenport's concentration wavered in sight of winning the set, but, when the Californian ran around her forehand to plant a killer in the far corner, it looked like it was going to get seriously one-sided.

However, in the second set, with Davenport tired and nervous, Hingis served to level the match. But Hingis's frailties let her down and she double faulted to let her opponent back in at 5-5. The end came almost anti-climactically, Hingis falling with a drop shot that sat up for Davenport to put away. The Californian sank to the ground after one hour, 21 minutes of the most enjoyable torture of her life. — *The Observer*

PHOTOGRAPH: RUSTY KENNEDY

Football Premiership: Tottenham Hotspur 0 Middlesbrough 3

Ricard leaves Spurs with mighty headache

David Lacey at White Hart Lane

THE return of Paul Gascoigne to his old haunts last Sunday left Tottenham looking as if they had seen a ghost. Not that he was the principal reason why Middlesbrough inflicted Spurs' second 3-0 home defeat of the season.

Although Gazza left the field to a standing ovation from his old admirers in White Hart Lane, this was more an appreciation of past performances than of what he had achieved in this match.

And in any case Tottenham's fans needed something to applaud after seeing their team's continued defensive frailties efficiently punished by a Boro side with confidence lifted by a midweek victory at Leicester which helped dispel the depression caused by Paul Merson's departure to Aston Villa for $11 million .

Gascoigne had scored the winning goal at Filbert Street, but last Sunday Middlesbrough owed more to Hamilton Ricard, their much-criticised Colombian striker, whose two goals in seven minutes around the half-hour gave Bryan Robson's side a grip of the game.

When Vladimir Kinder added a third two minutes after replacing Gascoigne late in the match, the home supporters began to evacuate the stands.

On paper Robson's decision to play four centre-backs in a five-man defence looked questionable, but this ignored the versatility of Gianluca Festa, who moved to the right and effectively played David Ginola out of that part of the pitch on which Tottenham might have made an impression.

Tottenham's midfield, lacking the injured Darren Anderton, was one-paced and unimaginative, and it is hard to believe a heavy-legged Nicola Berti would have stayed on until the end had Allan Nielsen not limped off early in the second half. Nielsen's replacement by Moussa Saib was the second of three quick substitutions made by David Pleat as he strove to add fresh dimensions to his team's one-paced approach.

Having seen Tottenham beat Blackburn 2-1 four days earlier, Pleat, back in charge of team matters, if only on a caretaker basis, for the first time since his first reign ended abruptly in 1987, was quickly reminded of how ephemeral success in football can be.

Spurs' 3-0 defeat by Sheffield Wednesday in their first home match of the season had precipitated the end of Christian Gross's nine-month term as manager. Whoever ends up as his successor will have much building to do.

The defensive foundations surely have to be redug. Well taken though Ricard's goals were, the ease of their creation was embarrassing. After 24 minutes, following a precise long pass from Gary Pallister, Ricard exchanged passes with Mikkel Beck before surging through a yawning gap in the middle to beat Espen Baardsen.

After 31 minutes the Colombian met Dean Gordon's throw on the left with a neat flick up to Beck before gathering the Dane's return header and bursting through a square, flat defence to score again.

Kinder replaced Gascoigne after 84 minutes and piled on the misery for Spurs after 86 when his powerful shot from the left was half-stopped by Baardsen, who then failed to keep it out.

"We didn't have that zip," said Pleat sadly. Certainly Spurs had gone into the match with one or two buttons undone.

The Guardian Weekly

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Clinton sweats it out after ordeal by videotape

White House upbeat after TV broadcast

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE White House claimed it could see the light at the end of the tunnel after the Republican party's drive to win public support for Bill Clinton's removal from office stumbled following the broadcast of the president's testimony in the Monica Lewinsky affair.

The four-hour recording, broadcast on Monday, failed to hand his enemies the prize they were looking for. Calling Mr Clinton's ordeal by television "an unnecessary day in the life of our country", the presidential spokesman, Mike McCurry, said the tape failed to match the "breathless anticipation".

However, Mr Clinton's grasp on the presidency remained shaky after large amounts of new and embarrassing detail about the Lewinsky affair were released. It is now assumed Congress will authorise an impeachment inquiry in October.

Most Democrats on Capitol Hill concentrated on condemning the release of the video as partisan, rather than rallying behind the president.

As the American public considered the unprecedented sight of their leader being questioned about intimate sexual details of his relationship with the former White House intern, world leaders gave Mr Clinton a standing ovation before he addressed the United Nations in New York *(see story, page 4)*.

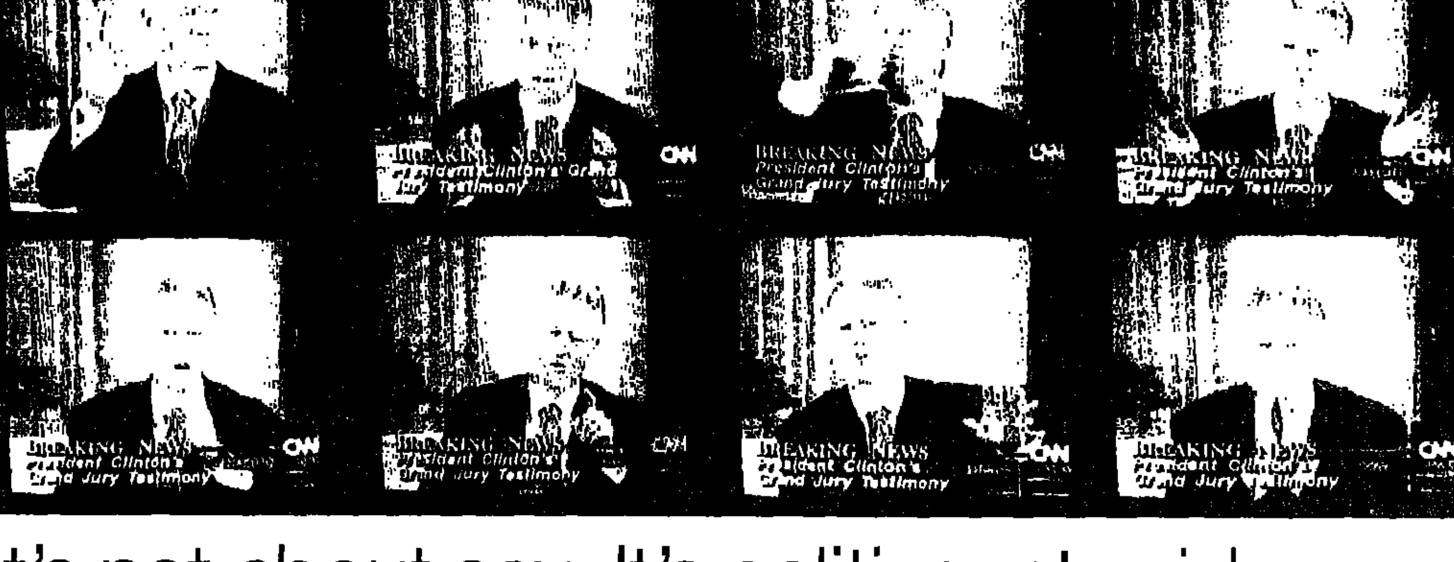
The initial impression of the videotape was that Mr Clinton was more composed than reports had suggested, with no angry outbursts or outright losses of temper. But a sometimes annoyed Mr Clinton admitted: "It's an embarrassing and personally painful thing" to be giving evidence.

He reserved his strongest attacks for the lawyers representing Paula Jones in her suit against him. "I deplored what they were doing," Mr Clinton said, adding that he was "determined to walk through the minefield of this deposition without violating the law, and I believe I did".

In a key exchange, Mr Clinton argued that his use of the term "inappropriately intimate contact" with Ms Lewinsky was consistent with his January 17 denial of sexual relations with her to lawyers representing Ms Jones, who tried to sue him for sexual harassment.

"I have said what inappropriately intimate is," Mr Clinton said. "I have said what it does not include, I — it did not include sexual intercourse — and I do not believe it included conduct which falls within the definition I was given in the Jones deposition."

Gingrich's move, page 6
Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 13



It's not about sex. It's politics, stupid

COMMENT
Polly Toynbee

HOW did it come to this, the ultimate humiliation, the president of the United States starring on the Jerry Springer-Oprah Winfrey Show of all time? Whatever the founding fathers meant by high crimes and misdemeanours, they were very clear about cruel and unusual punishment. This was slow torture by excruciating embarrassment.

"This material is unsuitable for children," the television news presenters warned sanctimoniously. It was unsuitable for us all. Sixty-eight per cent of Americans said so too — they never wanted the tapes broadcast. And 55 per cent said they wouldn't watch them in any form.

But of those who did watch, many may think a little better of their president and a great deal worse of his grotesque persecutors. As the hours of inexplicably crackly, ill-filmed tapes rolled on, the sense of unreality grew. Surely not? Not this? The precise legal status of "the insertion of an object into another person's genitalia"?

If once in a while — but surprisingly rarely — President Clinton protests, isn't that what victims of gross invasion of privacy have a right to do?

Despite all the gleeful advance briefings predicting that the tapes would kill Bill Clinton, the Republicans may have blundered badly.

Listening to all four hours and three minutes, the disproportion of this groping investigation into a pathetic and tacky affair defies belief: "Did you give her a box of cherry chocolates?"

Now we wait to see if the good sense of the voters holds up. So far, the majority still say he's doing a good job, and now his character may even emerge enhanced. He sounds human, warm and a great deal better than his prosecutors. Sure, he quibbles: "It depends on what the meaning of 'is' is" was a gem that will live for ever.

For four years, Kenneth Starr has trawled through the trashcans of the president and his wife — and in the end this is it, this is all. No evidence of misdeeds in the Whitewater property scheme in Arkansas, of abuse of files about opponents, of corruption over White House travel. The Paula Jones case — in which the president lied when he denied a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky — was set up and financed by the Republicans. It was thrown out of court.

No, what we watched this week was not about sex, lies, morals or the good of the nation. It's politics, stupid. So far 56 senators and congressmen have called for Mr Clinton's resignation and 54 of them are Republicans. Newt Gingrich, the House of Representatives' Speaker, is the man orchestrating this. He intends to run for president in 2000, and all he has ever wanted is to fell Mr Clinton.

But that may have blinded him to such an extent that he failed to see that these tapes restore a sense that Mr Clinton is also a likeable man, for all his flaws.

The Democrats, many of them fearful for their seats in November's mid-term elections, have squirmed, wriggled and privately raged at the president throughout all this. But now the excesses of Mr Gingrich and his Starr hell-hound could force them, willy nilly, into forming a phalanx behind their man. Because, when the chips are down, that is all there is — fierce partisan politics.

In the light of that, consider how bizarre it was that just as the videos were playing live across the world President Clinton was sitting down at a seminar in New York with Tony Blair to discuss a political strategy called the Third Way.

If ever there was an example of why there is no Third Way, it's here in Washington now. When the chips are down there is only Them and Us, Democrats and Republicans, progressives and reactionaries, the tolerant and the intolerant. He may not be the best champion for the left, but he is all they've got.

In the past few weeks, in the land of real politics, here are some of the battles Mr Clinton has fought with Mr Gingrich's party. First and most vital, he asked the Republican Congress for a desperately needed $18 billion in new money for the International Monetary Fund to use as aid to hose down the danger of global financial meltdown. Isolationist, anti-tax, short-sighted, the Republicans threw it out: they may live to regret that bitterly if molten drops start burning American toes.

What else? The Republicans drew up a plan to use the budget surplus to cut taxes for the rich. Mr Clinton angrily vetoed that, declaring the money was needed for education and social security. Last week the Republicans tried once more to outlaw late abortions. Mr Clinton vetoed that too. They'll try again.

So in the end, whether we admire Mr Clinton, whether he is a disappointment and an adolescent brat in his private life, is all beside the point. Just look across the floor at Mr Gingrich and know where you stand. Sex is not the issue.

Will Mr Clinton survive? If he does, he risks being deeply damaged. But forcing a president out over this paltry stuff will unleash a whole new sexual Armageddon in politics. It might have been fun to see some of Mr Clinton's key Republican accusers exposed last week as fornicating family-values liars, but will all politics from now on depend on penises, not policies?

At the United Nations on Monday the world's representatives gave a standing ovation to the US head of state. Whatever they each think of Clinton the man, they were united on the need to keep politics serious. The rest is decadence.



Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 8,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Learning to live with little White House lies

OBSTRUCTING justice, tampering with witnesses and perjury: all sound grave (Clinton parlays deal to stay in power, September 20). But when reduced to a case of a married boss caught in an affair with the office junior, saying to his loyal secretary, "For Christ's sake, get over to her flat and get the gifts back, and tell her I'll deny everything and she should do the same", it takes on a more human, and perhaps familiar, perspective.

Clinton's confusion about when to ask women to open or shut their mouths (usually in the wrong order) is deplorable, and Monica Lewinsky's lack of judgment about when to comply is unfortunate. But it is a situation exacerbated, and in some ways created, by Kenneth Starr's relentless pursuit. Whatever it reveals about Mr Clinton's lack of respect for his office, the importance of the presidency and the United States, his role in world affairs should not be sidetracked by this process.

Sierra Hutton-Wilson,
Evercreech, Somerset

WHO is Kenneth Starr and how "independent" is he? Ominously, he is a former Bush and Reagan employee. In the closing days of the 1992 presidential election campaign the Bush White House tried to smear the then Governor Clinton with allegations of wrongdoing in the Whitewater case. It attempted to enlist the US department of justice in a plan to generate a criminal referral on Mr Clinton before the election.

Since he was getting no change from Whitewater, Mr Starr then enlisted another Bush employee, Linda Tripp, to help in the Paula Jones case. The rest is recent history.

If anybody should resign it is Mr Starr, a man with a Republican past so entrenched that he is a disgrace to the title of "independent counsel".

Ken Cotterill,
Mareeba, Queensland, Australia

I AM sick and tired of statements and claims that the Clinton incident is a private and purely sexual affair that should be of no concern to anyone else. This is just not true because the example he has set to the world and the image he is creating affects everyone who values the truth as a basic need for a decent society.

Mr Clinton's behaviour has been reprehensible and an affront to civilised society. He must be shown that it is not acceptable. What chance has any parent got to convince his or her family that honesty is the best policy if someone exposed as a most consummate and persistent liar can reach, and be allowed to retain, such high office? And what chance is there of instilling discipline in the classroom or workplace when the "leader of the free world" shows such lack of control, entertains young ladies on government property during working hours and cheats on his wife?

R M Garven,
Perth, Scotland

THE most extraordinary revelation of the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal for me is that the White House, the office of the chief executive of the richest nation in the world, has a large staff of unpaid interns. Is this because Congress refuses funding, or is the White House just setting an example to global business?

John Leonard,
Canberra, Australia

WAS it, by any chance, a Cuban cigar? Now that really would be embarrassing.

Andy Kershaw,
London

Backing up the boys

CHARLOTTE RAVEN'S article shows quite clearly that the victors write the history books — and the newspaper articles (Belt up boys, September 6). Once again the feminist media industry springs into action to corner the victim market.

Her article clearly shows that sexist language still exists, but that most of it in print is by feminists discussing men — for example, "men are damaged goods", "men are not good enough", etc.

It shows the intrinsic intolerance of most of the feminist movement. Surely equal opportunities is a two-way street. Why can't men's issues be aired, debated without sexist articles like this being the response?

P Stafford,
Wadworth, Doncaster

CHARLOTTE RAVEN comments that in New Zealand "in gender terms, change is limited". Isn't this the case of any nation? Her conclusion: "It isn't that they don't know how to change, it's just they don't want to." Women bring up the boys — so what are we doing wrong?

Joyce Paton,
Havelock North, New Zealand

Blinded by 'science'

COMMENT pieces by John Gray and Larry Elliott (September 13) come as a breath of fresh air amid the neo-liberal ideology that still pervades most of the media and government policy in the West. But one is not optimistic. Most of the economic gurus are still basking in the quiet light of the "science" of economics, for which concrete details such as poverty, soaring bankruptcy rates and the like are simply irrelevant.

The problem is that the nostrums of economists who live in the rarefied air of abstract economic theorems are taken as dogma by governments and applied with inane phrases such as "short-term pain for long-term gain". The fact that most of the patients die is deemed irrelevant.

This is the benign interpretation. It is also possible that in this zero-sum game there are players who always win, and that Western governments in effect represent these players. Meanwhile, in their haste to create a capitalist world in which everything is for sale, the West's only concern is that some Russians may take this literally and sell weapons-grade plutonium to the highest bidder, or that some Latin Americans may find a market in the United States or Britain for certain white powdery substances. We didn't want the laws of the market to apply to these items.

Jordan Bishop,
Ottawa, Canada

JOHN GRAY'S warnings about the economic difficulties in Russia and East Asia must be taken seriously. It is simply untenable for Western governments to argue that the solution to Russia's problems or, indeed, to the threat of recession in their own economies, is an intensification of the process responsible for the crisis in the first place.

The instability of the global free market and the chronic insecurity it generates are now widely documented. The 1998 UN Human Development Report provides further damning evidence of its impact on poverty and inequality. The case for co-ordinated international action is now unanswerable. It is astonishing there has been so little debate in Britain on the implications of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

When negotiations on the MAI resume in October, the UK government will have a unique opportunity to give leadership to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in arguing for an international trading system based on the principles of social justice and environmental sustainability. This must involve global agreement on regulating capital flows.

David Chaytor MP,
London

Silicon chips with everything

IT IS certainly a neat trick to have a smart silicon chip planted in your arm, but let's not get carried away (Cyborg scientist opens door to the future, September 6). I can imagine nothing worse than being able to be located at any time anywhere within the building where I work.

As for the convenience of having my computer, lighting, heating etc. automatically switched on at my approach, this can really do nothing for me other than to get me to the contents of my in-tray several seconds earlier — a dubious advantage.

How refreshing, then, to see that the carrier of the silicon chip, himself a professor of cybernetics, acknowledges the potential Big Brotherliness of its new application. Far more common these days is the sight of scientists indulging in pontification over their selfless dedication to the advancement of humankind.

Whatever their confessed motives, it becomes clearer to me by the day that scientists and other standard-bearers of technological development do what they do for the same reason that dogs, according to the old joke, lick their genitals: because they can.

Simon Mantle,
Sydney, Australia

THE cybernetic gimcrackery of Professor Kevin Warwick is both pathetic and interesting. It is pathetic because it represents the emotional retardation and infantilism of boys playing with toys.

It duplicates in costly, complex and often absurd ways tasks that we can carry out perfectly well by ourselves. Its interest lies in the zone of socio-pathology, in so far as it reveals in contemporary humanity a drive, not just to use machines, but to become them; to strip ourselves of human function and replace it with mechanical function. To identify oneself thus with technology is, I suppose, a perverse form of totemism.

In Prof Warwick's cyborg paradise the human will be a manually inept blob of protoplasm housing a brain capable of infinite mechanical calculation, but zero insight.

Denys Trussell,
Auckland, New Zealand

Briefly

YOUR comment "War on the Poor" had acuity (August 6). It reminds me of an African proverb that my grandmother taught me when I was a young man in Ghana: "When your neighbour's home is on fire, rush to offer timely help. It is wiser."

The indebted poor are watching the rich and still pleading and asking why not? Jubilee 2000 was snubbed for a mere $2 billion, while $45 billion was quickly found to bail out Asia. Did I hear someone say the deepening economic malaise may call for a clean debt plate now for all, because we are in this catastrophe together and it is one world?

John Okraku Adu,
Khartoum, Sudan

DUNCAN Campbell's report (Police stop blacks eight times more than whites, August 2), is by no means new. Every so often a similar report is published, the Police Commissioner defends the action of his men, and the British public dig their heels in even more by showing greater contempt for their "blacks".

One hopes that with a Labour Home Secretary something positive will come out of these latest scandalous statistics. How one rids the many members of the police of their inherent racism could turn out to be a very taxing question for Jack Straw.

Yolande M Agble,
Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

CHRIS MORRIS reports from Ankara that "Turkey marked the 76th anniversary of its war of independence" (Turkey will not talk to Kurd rebels, September 6).

From whom, may I ask, did Turkey gain its independence? It is the rest of the Middle East and the Balkans that shed the yoke of Turkish imperialism 80 years ago at the end of the first world war.

M Y El-Tawil,
Esbjerg, Denmark

RACHEL CUSK'S criticism of the recent OUP and Chambers dictionaries shows a woeful ignorance of the role of a dictionary (September 6).

A good dictionary is descriptive — it presents the language as it is, rather than laments how someone thinks it should be. The OUP and Chambers have not "pandered to slang", they have merely begun to accurately reflect the state of English. Besides, no dictionary is the "custodian" of our language — we are all owners and contributors to an ever-changing English.

Phil Gurski,
Carleton University,
Ottawa, Canada

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Basque separatists declare ceasefire

Adela Gooch in Madrid

THE Basque separatist group ETA, heavily influenced by Northern Ireland's peace process, last week declared an open-ended ceasefire. It set no conditions but linked the move to a plan for talks on the future of the Basque country, where it has waged a 30-year violent campaign for an independent state.

The radical Basque daily Euskadi Información said it had received a statement from ETA in which the separatist group announced an "indefinite truce".

The group, which has killed nearly 800 people in its campaign, has observed ceasefires before, but they were of limited duration. This is the first time it has announced an open-ended ceasefire.

The four-page announcement, written in Basque, made references to the North Ireland peace agreement reached in the spring. It said "new political majorities" were forming in the Basque country and that, because of this, ETA was in a position "to take risks".

This was apparently in reference to a recent initiative in which moderate Basque nationalist parties, a mainstream leftist coalition and grassroots groups, joined ETA's political wing, Herri Batasuna, in calling for peace talks to end the bloodshed in the Basque country.

However, the Spanish prime minister, José María Aznar, said that he could not trust the ceasefire and called on the separatists to show their desire for peace with actions not words.

"After 30 years of terrorist activity we cannot give the ETA organisation the benefit of the doubt," Mr Aznar said during a visit to Peru last week. "If ETA really wants to put an end to its trail of death, it has to realise that any step toward credibility must be earned with actions and not declarations."

Other ministers responded cautiously but none rejected the move out of hand. "We cannot play with people's desire for peace," said the interior minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, recognising widespread public hopes for a peace process to end 30 years of violence in the region. He added that time would determine "the authenticity of ETA's decision".

The ceasefire announcement clearly caught the government by surprise. Mr Mayor said he would hold talks on the truce with all political parties, but he did not make clear whether he would include Herri Batasuna.

The nationalist president of Catalonia, Jordi Pujol, whose votes support Mr Aznar's minority centre-right government in Madrid, urged the prime minister to seize an opportunity that could lead to a peace settlement in the Basque region, which straddles the border between Spain and France. "The challenge should be taken up — even if there is a risk of deception," he said.

The ceasefire declaration came days after non-violent Basque nationalist parties called on ETA to follow the example of the IRA, whose ceasefire paved the way for talks in Northern Ireland.

Moderate Basque politicians described ETA's decision as a breakthrough which followed discussions in the summer held by Basque political parties on how to solve a conflict that began in the late 1960s for an independent homeland.

Comment, page 12

Berisha faces coup charges in Albania

Owen Bowcott in Tirana

ALBANIA'S parliament last week voted to strip the opposition leader, Sali Berisha, of his political immunity, opening the way for the government to charge him with organising an armed uprising.

The move came as the Socialist prime minister, Fatos Nano, issued a statement accusing Dr Berisha's Democratic party followers of attacking a police station in the northern town of Lexha.

In a clear warning to the Democratic party opposition, the government said: "These desperate attempts to keep alive the spirit of the failed *coup d'état* of Sali Berisha, and terrorist elements who respond to his irresponsible calls, do nothing else but aggravate the position of the Democratic party leadership.

"Neither Sali Berisha nor anyone else should ever think they will come out untouched if they continue to rely on the force of arms by refusing to ... hand over all the military arsenal they have."

But Dr Berisha, who denied any part in the Lexha attack, claimed the government was inventing killings to make people panic. He has called for protests every day until Mr Nano's government is driven from power. He said: "I invite us to organise a peaceful march. The prime minister wants to divert the country towards civil conflict. But we shall show him that this is completely unreasonable."

The senior official in Tirana for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Daan Everts, is playing a pivotal role in trying to broker a deal between Dr Berisha and Mr Nano under which the Democratic party leader could face lesser charges and avoid immediate arrest.

"There's pressure from the international community not to put Dr Berisha on trial," a senior government adviser, Gramoz Pashko, said. "But ... justice has to be done."

International lobbying reflects anxiety in the United States and European Union about further destabilisation in the Balkans. Arresting Dr Berisha, they fear, would provoke his followers, who hold hundreds of Kalashnikov and other weapons looted during last year's anarchy.



The coffin of an Iranian journalist killed in Afghanistan is carried in Tehran PHOTOGRAPH: MOHAMMAD SAYYAD

Funerals fuel Iran rage against Taliban

Suzanne Goldenberg and agencies

TENS OF thousands of people accompanied the coffins of Iranian diplomats slain by Afghanistan's Taliban through Tehran last week in a public display of mourning that stoked anger towards the Afghan regime just days before military exercises on the countries' joint border.

But while Tehran gave official sanction to the venting of rage against the Taliban, the fundamentalist militia and its closest ally — Pakistan — struggled to effect a reconciliation.

In Kabul the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, appealed to the United Nations to help resolve the crisis. "The problems between Afghanistan and Iran will not be solved under military pressure," he said.

In Tehran few appeared willing to listen. Crowds chanting "Death to the Taliban" poured out of mosques after Friday prayers to follow the bodies to their resting place near the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran's revolution.

At Tehran university, Zabihullah Bakhshi, a member of the militant Ansar-e Hizbullah group, placed his hand on a coffin and shouted: "We will get your revenge. We will not let your blood go to waste."

A statement read at the end of the funerals called on Tehran to provide Afghans living in Iran with weapons to "fight the backward Taliban militia in Afghanistan".

On Monday major powers meeting at the UN in New York called on the Taliban to accept an international investigation into reported mass killings and open talks on sharing power with its rivals.

A joint statement by the United States, Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan also demanded that the fundamentalist Sunni Muslim militia obey international humanitarian law and respect human rights and women's rights.

The eight countries endorsed a planned visit to the region by the UN special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, to try to revive talks between the Taliban and other ethnic and religious minorities. They condemned the killings of Iranian diplomats and UN personnel in Afghanistan and demanded that the Taliban bring those guilty to justice.

The Taliban were not represented at the UN talks because the international community does not recognise it as the legal government. Pakistan said recognition would make the problem easier, but no other state advocated such a move.

The Iranian president, Mohammad Khatami, who addressed the General Assembly, appealed to the UN to exert international pressure on the Taliban to halt what he called genocide. Iran has massed 200,000 troops and 70,000 Revolutionary Guards on its Afghan border.

Mr Khatami said that Afghanistan had been turned into "a haven for violence, terrorism and the production and trafficking of narcotics". But he added that there was no military solution to the problem.

● Anti-Taliban forces killed nine people on Monday when they fired two rockets into Kabul as dazed residents dug at rubble with bare hands for survivors of an attack a day earlier in which scores of people died.

Taliban officials said it was too early to say how many were wounded in Monday's attack on the northern Kharikhana district, but put the toll from last Sunday at 65 dead and 200 injured.

The Week

BILJANA Plavsic, the moderate Bosnian Serb president, conceded defeat to Nikola Popalsen, an extreme nationalist in the September 13 elections. The outcome is a blow to the West's strategy of bringing Serbs, Muslims and Croats back together after the war in Bosnia.

Washington Post, page 14

FEUDING Iraqi Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani have agreed to set up an elected government by next summer in northern Iraq after a transitional period of power- and revenue-sharing.

THREE Croats accused of committing atrocities against Serbs in the 1991 war declined to enter a plea at the opening of the first such trial in Croatia.

THE MASSACRE of 18 men, women and children in the Mexican town of Ensenada near the US border has been followed by evidence that the authorities are implicated in the drugs trade with which the killings have been linked.

A PHILIPPINES inter-island ferry with more than 400 people aboard sank. At least 39 were reported dead.

EUROPEAN transport unions are planning a one-day truckers' strike on October 1, followed by a long winter of disruption after they failed to reach a deal with employers on limits on working hours.

RUSSIA'S central bank, tackling the financial crisis even before the prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov, has finished forming a government, indicated it would print money to pay off state debts and bail out banks.

Preparing for winter, page 7

INDONESIA'S president, B J Habibie, bowed to popular pressure and ordered an investigation into the financial affairs of the former dictator, General Suharto.

A SENIOR United Nations human rights official expressed concern about arrests, disappearances and the discovery of 16 bodies in and around the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, since the government cracked down on opposition protesters.

A PALESTINIAN teenager was shot dead and another wounded when Jewish settlers opened fire in the West Bank, fuelling tension over the continuing border closure and plans to build in the occupied territories.

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THE cockpit voice recorder in Swissair Flight 111 stopped six minutes before the jetliner crashed, providing further evidence of the jet's systems breakdown. All 220 people on board were killed.

Mahathir cracks down on protests

Nick Hopkins in Kuala Lumpur and agencies

POLICE in Malaysia clashed with anti-government protesters for the second day running on Monday shortly before the Queen closed the Commonwealth Games.

Authorities used a sweeping law to round up allies of the sacked finance minister and deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, after riot police repeatedly fired water cannon and tear gas at several thousand demonstrators.

They had converged on a courthouse in central Kuala Lumpur where they expected Mr Anwar to be charged, after being investigated for sodomy and corruption. He never appeared in court.

The riots were the culmination of a feud between the prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, and Mr Ibrahim, who was sacked in disgrace last month after being accused of sodomising his adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja, and a Pakistani friend, Munawar Ahmad Anees.

Both were jailed for six months last week after pleading guilty to allowing themselves to be violated by him.

Mr Anwar, Malaysia's most popular politician, vehemently denied the allegations and claimed that the scandal was part of a conspiracy orchestrated by an envious prime minister hell bent on destroying his credibility.

He believes the jailed men were forced to confess to incidents that never happened. He has since been campaigning to oust Dr Mahathir from office with a self-styled Reformasi (Reform) movement.

It took police brandishing shields more than three hours to disperse the protesters on Monday and seal off a large swath of the capital, including Merdeka Square where 30,000 demonstrators had congregated with Mr Anwar the previous day.

The arrest of Mr Anwar last Sunday under the Internal Security Act (ISA), followed by the rounding up of at least five political leaders and dozens of protesters, reflected the determination of Dr Mahathir to nip the reform movement in the bud. But the street protests clearly caught the government by surprise. "We never expected this to happen," said one diplomat.

Police also confirmed that the youth wing leader of the ruling United Malays National Organisation, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, and four leaders of the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia, had been arrested.

Opposition leaders and human rights groups said that use of the ISA could presage a major national crackdown against dissent, similar to 1987 when more than 100 people were rounded up.

"The ISA, in itself, is a threat to human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Malaysia," the Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Voice) said in a statement. "Not only are the detainees deprived of their right to a fair trial, the ISA also gives one man [Dr Mahathir] the power to decide the fate of dissenters in the country."

The protests took place on the final day of the games, which were intended to showcase Malaysia's economic development.



Malaysian police in Kuala Lumpur grapple with a supporter of the former deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim PHOTO: GOH CHAI HIN

The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, bluntly told Dr Mahathir that the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh must be kept out of the country's political crisis. The games' closing ceremony at the National Stadium passed peacefully.

Diplomatic relations were further strained when broadcasters, including the BBC, discovered that their reports were being censored by the Malaysian authorities.

Footage of the clashes between police and protesters demanding the resignation of Dr Mahathir was blacked out by hackers, who intercepted transmissions bound for a satellite link.

Polls give life to Kohl's campaign

Ian Traynor in Bonn

SENSING that he can close the narrowing gap on his challenger, Gerhard Schröder, and snatch a record fifth-term victory from the jaws of defeat, Chancellor Helmut Kohl on Monday appealed to all of Germany's 60.5 million voters to turn out for the general election this weekend.

Opinion polls in the past few days have all indicated a neck-and-neck sprint to the finish on Sunday, with the chancellor's Christian Democrats (CDU) pulling to within two percentage points of Mr Schröder's Social Democrats (SPD), after months in which the SPD seemed to be cruising to victory after 16 years in opposition.

On Monday Mr Schröder acknowledged the "mobilising power" of the party Mr Kohl has led for 25 years. The chancellor clearly calculates that the more people who cast their ballots, the better his chances of remaining in power. General elections in Germany usually attract turnouts of 80-90 per cent, and there is no evidence to suggest that fewer people will vote this time.

"We have every chance of winning," Mr Kohl said, describing this as "the decisive week" and claiming to detect a "palpable shift" in the public mood in his favour. All the opinion polls, regularly scorned by Mr Kohl, support his contention that the trend has turned in his favour, although pundits still believe it could be too late for a CDU recovery.

A survey of Frankfurt stock exchange traders published on Monday by the Düsseldorf business newspaper Handelsblatt tipped Mr Schröder over Mr Kohl to be the country's next chancellor by a margin of 71 to 26.

The Bonn political establishment, however, is in the grip of panic as the election race speeds up. An air of exhaustion and semi-defeatism is creeping into the Schröder camp as the consistent and comfortable opinion poll lead of the past few months bleeds away.

The Christian Democrats, by contrast, have gained a fresh spurt of energy as they sense they could yet hold on to the chancellorship.

The opinion polls are so close that the margin of error of three percentage points means their verdicts are less clear than ever. The polls also suggest that about 25 per cent of voters have yet to make up their minds, paving the way for a frantic last few days of campaigning to convert the don't knows.

Mr Kohl's opinion poll ratings have been at their lowest in the formerly communist eastern part of the country, and he was expected to focus his efforts there this week in an attempt to make up the lost ground.

Mr Schröder kept his options open by stating that there would have to be a pact between the Social and Christian Democrats if dictated by the electoral arithmetic.

● German officials said that an Arab man arrested near Munich last week was a close associate of Osama bin Laden, the alleged terrorist mastermind of the bombings of United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August. Reports identified the man as Mamduh Mahmud Salim.

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Washington Post, page 14

UN standoff over Iraq

THE crisis between Iraq and the West deepened with new allegations of sanctions-busting by Baghdad and no resolution of the latest standoff over United Nations weapons inspections, *writes Ian Black*.

With world leaders at the UN General Assembly this week and Iraq announcing fresh talks with the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, a description from a defector of how the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, organised oil smuggling in contravention of UN sanctions seemed designed to bolster international support for the measures.

The defector, Sami Salih, was probably the most important Iraqi to reach the West since President Saddam's brother-in-law, Hussein Kamil, revealed details of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programmes when he fled to Jordan three years ago.

Mr Salih, now in hiding in Belgium, is said to have given the US and Britain vital information about a network of front companies in Europe and the Middle East that were set up to handle the illegal oil trade.

The US state department last week warned Iraq against ceasing co-operation with Unscom. That came after Baghdad threatened to end further arms inspections if the UN Security Council did not reverse last week's resolution suspending regular reviews of the sanctions.

Clinton assails terror in UN speech

Ian Black in New York

PRESIDENT Clinton called on the world to fight against terrorism without compromise on Monday but failed to dispel widespread resentment over the United States' attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan in August and Washington's failure to pay its dues to the United Nations.

Sticking to his formal address to the UN General Assembly in New York despite the overwhelming distraction as his videotaped testimony about the Monica Lewinsky affair aired on television, Mr Clinton stood gravely at the marble podium and urged greater international co-operation to fight what he called "the world's problem".

Citing the recent bombing atrocities in Omagh, in Northern Ireland, and against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as attacks in Tokyo, Argentina and the Middle East, the president said: "We know many people see us [the US] as a symbol of a system and values they reject, but we are no threat to any peaceful nations. For us to weaken our opposition to terrorism would hand the enemies of peace a victory.

"It is a grave misconception to see terrorism as only an American problem. Terror is not a way to tomorrow, it is only a throwback to yesterday. The killing of innocents is not a social programme."

Mr Clinton said he wanted the US to make a special effort to reach out to the Muslim world, insisting there was no clash of civilisations but only a choice between good and evil.

"We have seen false prophets distort the words of their faith to justify cold-blooded murder," he said. "But they do not represent what we know Islam to be."

Returning to a theme that has often proved popular with international audiences, the president called for enhanced co-operation to fight the new technologies available to terrorists. But he said there must also be greater efforts to tackle what he called "the sources of despair" before they turned into hatred.

Mr Clinton made a clear but far from convincing attempt to dispel the mounting concern that the world's only superpower is dangerously distracted from its global responsibilities.

He called for greater attention to the world economic crisis, to prevent a loss of confidence in free markets and democracy, and for a halt to the spread of weapons of mass destruction after this year's tit-for-tat nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.

But he conspicuously failed to mention the disastrous state of relations between the US and the UN, with the prospect that the US will lose its General Assembly vote by the end of the year because Congress is holding back payment of more than $1.5 billion over half the organisation's annual operating budget.

Mr Clinton is seen as too weak or unwilling to battle a hostile Congress to preserve a strong US role. In order to avoid losing its General Assembly vote, the US will have to pay some $200 million by the end of the year, but congressional complications are expected to prevent this.

Beyond the UN, with economic crises in Asia and Russia, violence in Kosovo, impasse in the Middle East peace process and nuclear proliferation out of control in India and Pakistan, fears are growing that the US administration is too preoccupied to focus on big global issues.

Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, the senior Democrat on the Senate foreign relations committee, said: "Foreign leaders who know about the president's difficulties, who know about the attitude and partisanship of Congress, are wondering whether this is a president who can deliver. I think, in a sense, foreign policy has been paralysed."

● Tony Blair on Monday spelt out his vision of a global economic partnership of centre-left governments under the gaze of Mr Clinton at New York University. But his attempt to put flesh on the bones of his political philosophy, the Third Way, was overshadowed by his resolve to stand by his beleaguered friend.

White liberals squeezed out in new South Africa

David Beresford in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA can achieve miracles, ruefully observed one of the country's constitutional court judges, Albie Sachs, recently. "But it cannot achieve the achievable."

Mr Sachs, who lost an arm when his car was bombed by the South African security forces during the anti-apartheid struggle, was speaking at a farewell function for a Johannesburg academic.

The cynical note was all the more striking because it came from a judge regarded as an unrehabilitated romantic by his colleagues.

But then it was not just any academic Mr Sachs was saying farewell to. The "new" South Africa, it seems, does not have room for Professor John Dugard.

Prof Dugard, who has left to take up a post at Leiden university in the Netherlands, is a world authority on international law, admired in liberal circles for his opposition to apartheid. One of the architects of the progressive new constitution, he decided to leave South Africa after he was passed over for a judicial post, seemingly because of his skin colour.

South Africa's predominantly white élite are going through another of their periodic bouts of pessimism about the future of the country and their role — or lack of one — in it. A poll, published earlier this month, showed that 74 per cent of people with skilled jobs are longing to emigrate.

"In the old South Africa a significant number of people of darker hues accepted and welcomed me because of my anti-apartheid views," one white liberal wrote in a Johannesburg newspaper. "In the new South Africa I am treated with contempt and hatred for no other reason than that I have a white skin."

The author was Mandi Smallhorne, a member of the Black Sash — that gallant band of white women who engaged in a famous crusade against National party rule during the dark days of apartheid.

The hostility of black South Africans towards their former "comrades" in the liberal community has also manifested itself in a succession of attacks on the English language press. The Guardian's sister newspaper in Johannesburg, the Mail & Guardian, has been a consistent target.

Early this year, after it disclosed the alleged shady past of the African National Congress premier of Gauteng, the richest province, the newspaper was subjected to a broadside of racial invective.

In an editorial, it protested: "It is completely irrelevant to us that the premier of Gauteng is a black man. But it matters to us very much that he seems to be a crook."

The distinction went unrecognised in some quarters, however. The Black Lawyers' Association and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa lodged a formal complaint against the newspaper with the country's human rights committee, charging it with "subliminal racism".

They claimed that the majority of the paper's exposés were of corruption among blacks, and declared this often left "very little room for these individuals to have any sense of dignity" and was "violating the rights of black people to equality".

Indian women 'sterilised for votes' in Brazil

Alex Bellos in Rio de Janeiro

DOZENS of women from a tribe of Brazilian Indians were sterilised by a doctor in exchange for their votes in Brazil's last election, prompting fears about the survival of the tribe, according to a São Paulo daily newspaper.

At least 63 women of the Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe tribe in the northern coastal state of Bahia are reported to have been sterilised four years ago by a doctor who is standing again in federal elections next month. The revelations in the daily paper O Globo threaten to create a storm.

It is common practice in poor areas of Brazil for election candidates to bribe voters with gifts. Women are often offered sterilisation as an effective method of birth control.

According to the newspaper, the women agreed to the operations. But aid agencies believe they were acting against their best interests and putting their civilisation in jeopardy.

"They do this kind of thing without understanding the real consequences. What is at play here isn't the individual, it is the whole community," said Roberto Liebgott, of the Missionary Council for Indigenous Affairs.

According to O Globo, the women were sterilised during the 1994 election by Roland Lavigne, a doctor who was standing as a federal deputy. Dr Lavigne, who denies the allegations, is standing for re-election on October 4.

The sterilisations are linked to land disputes with local coffee and cacao plantation owners, who have ties to politicians.

"Politicians are doing this to kill off the nation," Alcides Fransisco Filho, a Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe chief, told O Globo.

The 1,500-strong tribe live in poverty in six villages 110km inland from the coastal town of Ilheus. In the village of Bahetá there have been no births in four years because all 10 women of child-bearing age were sterilised.

The allegations could become an embarrassment to the president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, because Dr Lavigne is a member of the rightwing Liberal Front, whose support his coalition depends on.

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Newt relishes role as Bill's nemesis

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

IF Newt Gingrich died today, historians of United States politics would have a relatively easy job assessing his legacy. He was a leader who had it all going for him, and who blew it.

The Gingrich who surged to victory at the head of a vengeful anti-Bill Clinton Republican congressional majority in the mid-term elections of 1994 seemed to be one of the great radical reactionaries of the age. A year later, though, he overreached himself fatally, trying to shut down the federal government on what he and his allies thought was a point of populist principle, only to discover that the American people thought it an act of obsessive madness.

That Gingrich was the architect of Clinton's first great presidential fall, and by the overreach of his audacity also the architect of Clinton's first great presidential recovery. Clinton's 1996 re-election left Gingrich a punctured and less awesome figure, a bit like Mike Tyson after he met Evander Holyfield. Though there the comparison ends, not least because Gingrich has come through his eclipse and is now a stronger, though not necessarily wiser, political fighter. Now in 1998, Gingrich has won a rematch, not with the federal government this time, but with the president and the presidency.

For if Clinton is the central character in the drama that is convulsing Washington, then the man who is writing the script of these extraordinary events is Gingrich.

Feminists may be preoccupied with Monica Lewinsky and Hillary Clinton. Gossip mongers may be diverted by Matt Drudge and Salon magazine. Conspiracy theorists may be riveted by Kenneth Starr and Sidney Blumenthal. These are all fascinating and in some cases important figures. Ultimately, though, they are peripheral to the main event. The person who really matters now is Gingrich.

The hunting of Clinton has always been highly political, but until September 11 there were other aspects to it too. With the submission of the Starr report to Congress, however, Clinton's crisis became wholly and explicitly political. And since Congress is controlled by the Republicans, and since the leader of the Republicans is the House Speaker, Gingrich is the playmaker of the Clinton crisis.

Gingrich underlined his centrality in a rare but trenchant set of comments last week when he addressed the conservative Christian Coalition. His words made clear that, if necessary, he is prepared to go all the way in driving Clinton out of office. "This is a constitutional challenge," he said. "We in the House will do our duty. We won't do an inch more than our duty for partisanship, and we won't do an inch less than our duty out of intimidation . . . We will let the facts lead us where they lead us."

Yet in spite of exceptions such as that address, Gingrich is trying to keep out of the limelight as events take their course on Capitol Hill. But in the shadows, he is plotting that course, and with it Clinton's and his own future.

As his remarks indicate, Gingrich has been careful to take, or at least to appear to take, the formal and bipartisan high ground in dealing with the Starr report. He has emphasised that Clinton's potential impeachment is a procedural and constitutional question, and he has gone out of his way to allow the minority Democrats to have equal access to Starr's evidence and to be consulted about the shaping of the process.



Prize fighter: Gingrich moves to a war footing PHOTO. DAN LOH

At the same time, Gingrich has taken care not to appear preoccupied with the Starr report. But over the months he has spent time plotting the Republican response to the long-awaited Starr recommendations. Like Trent Lott, his opposite number in the Senate, Gingrich spent the summer vacation reading widely on impeachment and drawing up his strategy. His pose may be of neutrality and business as usual, but his grasp and control of the events that are now unfolding on Capitol Hill is total and unchallenged.

"He calls all the shots," a senior colleague told the New York Times the other day. "If tapes are going to be released, it's his decision. If hearings are going to be held, he will decide. He consults with us. He listens to us. But he makes the calls."

Now that he has got Clinton on the hook, Gingrich intends to play the president on a long line. He is as well aware as the White House that Clinton remains a popular president and that public opinion is opposed to impeachment. But he has decided to pursue a gradual, drip-drip strategy on Capitol Hill in the hope that, over the weeks ahead, the Republican-controlled constitutional process will create a momentum in which public opinion begins to desert Clinton and to conclude that impeachment is the lesser of two evils.

That is why he was promptly in favour of the publication of the Starr report — by his beloved Internet. That is why he pressed the process for the release of Starr's supplementary materials, including videotapes of the president's evidence to the grand jury. That is why it is inevitable that, in a few weeks' time, Republicans will vote for the course that Gingrich also wants, a formal impeachment inquiry.

In the short term, the purpose of this strategy is to ratchet up the tension in advance of the November 3 mid-term elections. Gingrich's pollsters have told him that core Republicans are more likely to vote than core Democrats this year, a reminder that Clinton's popularity in the polls is not a guarantee of Democratic popularity in the elections.

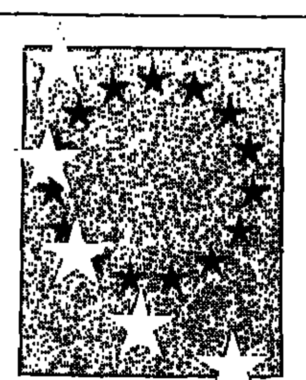
The Republicans have a majority of 11 seats in the current 435-member House of Representatives, and Gingrich is set on increasing that majority this autumn. In the Senate, where the Republicans have 55-45 majority, he aims to push his party towards an unlikely but not utterly inconceivable 67 seats. Gains like these would give him and Lott a stranglehold on the impeachment process in both Houses.

Boosted by electoral success, and with the defeated Democrats more demoralised than ever, Gingrich clearly believes that the path to impeachment would then lie open before him, provided always that events rather than rightwing partisanship appear to be driving the process. And if he can pull that trick, then he will turn his attention to another goal — winning the Republican presidential nomination in 2000 to replace Clinton.

If he pulls that off, then the premature obituaries will look very foolish. Will he do it? Has he learned not to overreach himself? Therein lies the unknown answer to the current crisis.

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Left takes bite out of Sweden's middle



Europe this week
Martin Walker

THE result of Sweden's general election has put a large dent in that fashionable idea that the politics of Europe will be dominated by a moderate and modernised centre-left of market-friendly social democrats, all eager to follow Bill Clinton and Tony Blair down the path of the the "Third Way".

Just as Germany's Social Democrat leader Gerhard Schröder began to drop his Blairite slogan of "the new middle" and start sounding like a reborn socialist in the last two weeks of the German election campaign, so Sweden's general election has left Europe's historically most successful Social Democrat party (SDP) clinging desperately to the ropes.

After governing Sweden for 57 of the past 66 years, the SDP won only 36 per cent of the vote last Sunday — its worst performance in 70 years. The prime minister, Göran Persson, is likely to stay in office, but only with the supportive votes of the tiny Green party and the resurgent Left party, which saw its share of the vote rising from just over 5 per cent four years ago to 12 per cent this week, effectively giving it the balance of power.

Led by Gudrun "the Red" Schyman, a reformed alcoholic and single mother who raised her two children on welfare, the Left is the old Swedish Communist party given a new lease of life by feminism. It is firmly opposed to Sweden's joining the European single currency and wants to leave the European Union.

On the campaign trail, Schyman wore a curious badge on the lapel of her red jacket. It depicts a Swedish krona with a bite taken out to symbolise the 20 per cent lower pay rates that women receive. Schyman wants men's wages to be held down until women achieve full pay equality, and wants to see the working week cut to 35 hours.

After four years of imposing welfare cuts in order to balance a bankrupt state budget, the ruling Social Democrats paid the price at the polls, where their share of votes fell from the 45 per cent they enjoyed in 1994. Most of this week's defectors seem to have been women voting for the Left party, with its pledge of 100,000 new public sector jobs.

The SDP would have done far worse had it not been for the tireless efforts of its minister for development and immigration, Pierre Schori, to rally support among that 20 per cent of the Stockholm electorate who were born overseas. Schori, a close colleague of Olaf Palme, the murdered Social Democrat prime minister, is still the Third World conscience of his party.

The challenge for Schori was to get the immigrant voters to the polls. The usual Swedish turnout is over 85 per cent at elections. Barely half of these new voters, who get the franchise in municipal elections after three years, go to the polls at all. And some of them said that despite their affection for Schori, they would probably vote for the Left party this time.

The SDP lost much of its support over the way it sharply cut into Sweden's welfare state. Coming into office four years ago with a massive budget deficit of 14 per cent of gross domestic product, it immediately moved to cut public spending and raise taxes. The government achieved a small budget surplus but at the cost of slashing 100,000 public sector jobs in a population of fewer than 9 million.

Persson's Social Democrats may have governed responsibly and restored the country to economic health, with almost zero inflation and a host of retraining schemes that have brought nominal unemployment down to less than 8 per cent. But it has not reassured many Swedes, who fear that their country is on a steady downward path.

In 1970 Sweden was Europe's richest country in GDP per capita. One Swedish krona had the sar e value as a deutschmark. Today it takes 5 kronor to buy a mark, and Sweden, along with Britain, is sitting among the poorest third of the 15 EU member states. This decline has hurt national pride, and now Ericsson, one the country's biggest and most successful corporations, is threatening to move its headquarters to the lower tax and more business-friendly atmosphere of London. The prospect of Sweden being governed by a centre-left coalition dependent on communist and anti-European votes is unlikely to make Ericsson feel any happier about staying.

Persson flew to New York this week for a day-long seminar on the Third Way with President Clinton, Britain's Tony Blair and Italy's Romano Prodi. But with Clinton engulfed in scandal, and Blair's personal approval ratings starting to sag, Sweden's example of social democracy in action is making the Third Way — rather like Clinton — much less attractive than it was.

Schyman notes that Swedish politicians and voters seem far more forgiving than their American counterparts. She has led a colourful life. "I had the sickness of alcoholism," Schyman explained. "I did not lie about it and I cured myself, with a lot of support from people of all parties."

The final shape of Sweden's new government will not be clear until the 350-seat Rikstad reconvenes next month. It is theoretically possible, but unlikely, that Persson will try to form a government with the support of the small centrist and conservative parties, rather than pay the price for winning the Left's support. The crucial factor will be Persson's calculation about Sweden's future in Europe.

So far Sweden, like Britain and Denmark, has remained outside the single currency zone. Persson's fellow Social Democrats have been alerted to expect a special party conference to discuss whether and how Sweden should join the euro. The conference will probably coincide with Sweden's turn as President of the European Council of Ministers in the first half of 2001. But with Gudrun the Red looking over his shoulder, Persson may find he has little choice but to stick with the Swedish krona at least until the next election in 2002.

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Village battles to survive winter

James Meek in Pavshino

IN RUSSIA a heavy crop of rowan berries is said to mean a hard frost and a rich harvest. In the woods around Pavshino village the berries glowed scarlet and hung thick as grapes.

Rowan berries are inedible. Nina Goncharova had something better to show. Behind the wooden house her father built before the revolution was a lean-to. Inside was a mound of newly-dug potatoes.

Beside the eating potatoes, neatly separated, were the seed potatoes for next year's crop. Just inside the door were beets and carrots. In the cellar was an ocean of pickles in huge glass jars.

Pavshino's name comes from the Russian word for "fallen", after a battle that left its meadows littered with dead Tatars. It lies roughly 250km south of Moscow, in Tula region, a half-industrial, half-agricultural land.

Superficially, Russia's economic crisis has sent Tula reeling backwards into the clash of ideologies of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when local party bosses tried and failed to get the market in an armlock.

This month the governor, Vasily Starodubtsev, one of the leaders of the failed coup against Mikhail Gorbachev in August 1991, attempted to avoid hyperinflation by ordering traders not to raise prices by more than 15 per cent, although the rouble has veered by around 60 per cent in recent weeks.

Tula city is an hour from Pavshino by bus, but crisis tidings are like messages from another world to Ms Goncharova, aged 58. Although she has a flat in town, she spends most of her time in the village with her 79-year-old mother, her vegetable garden and 20 chickens. "I never have to buy vegetables. I don't even know the price," she said.

Her pension, worth about $25, is several months in arrears, but covers essentials such as sugar and luxuries like meat. The tiny bills from the country's half-commercial gas and electricity monopolies help.

With her serenity, she seemed to have stepped out of a Victorian sampler illustrating the lives of the virtuous poor. Her mother was less content. She popped her head in and out of the window, bemoaning the injustice of pension non-payment.

"There are problems, but you get what you work for," said Ms Goncharova, smiling beatifically. "If you look after the soil it'll look after you . . . we've never been without bread or sugar. That's not poverty. Poverty's when you have nothing to eat or drink."

Pavshino is more than a stereotypical dying Russian village. It is a working farm, vital to the country's hopes of wintering the latest crisis without food shortages.

The farm, a 3,000-hectare Soviet collective converted into a more democratic type of co-operative called an SPK, gives life to the community, with a school, shop, telephones and a club.

Nikolai Savin, aged 33, the newly-elected farm director, has barely noticed the crisis. He is preoccupied with getting in the harvest. Besides, when has the village not been in crisis? "If the government said tomorrow that they were clearing all our debts," he said, "we'd soon get into debt again."

The collective cannot afford to harvest all its potatoes. While Mr Savin spoke he was interrupted by the phone as factory directors, army officers and middlemen offered to send labourers on a pick-your-own basis. He agreed, for 1.5 roubles (about 10 cents) a kilogram, half the shop price.

A field worker came in with a green ear of oats and one of corn. Heavy rain has delayed the harvest. Mr Savin chewed on a corn grain and gave the nod. Minutes later an elderly combine harvester headed for the fields.

The cows fed on the corn produce meat and milk. The milk is sold to a local dairy monopoly for about six cents a litre, less than cost, and much of the meat goes to the district authorities to pay for the diesel they lent the farm for spring sowing. The local council took cash from its health and welfare budget to buy the diesel. In return it gives the food to schools, hospitals and children's homes.



Russian soldiers work with pensioners to bring in the carrot harvest on a collective farm PHOTOGRAPH: PETER DEJONG

It is less a system than a balancing act riddled with opportunities for abuse.

Mr Savin pays his 150 workers their salaries, a rare enough feat these days (his own pay is about $40 a month). But he can't pay back the years of unpaid wages under the previous farm boss, or the loans of the early 1990s. Nor does he pay his electricity bills, adding to the problems that the power companies have paying debts and wages. Sometimes the electricity is cut off, but only when the farm doesn't really need it.

He said: "If they'd give the farm new equipment, if milk was 30 per cent more expensive, and diesel was 30 per cent cheaper, we could get by perfectly well."

If the government led by the recently appointed prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov, gets its way, Russian agricultural equipment will roll off the conveyors on a wave of cheap money, farmers will get loans to buy it, import barriers will go up, and energy prices will be artificially cut. But the new government's moves towards state involvement could easily turn into a parody of the command economy.

Ms Goncharov sees everything more simply. "If you're in the town, trying to live on your pension, you're going to die," she said, smiling sweetly. "Here in the country, you'll survive."

Emergency in Baltic enclave jolts Moscow

Tom Whitehouse in Kaliningrad

ON DAY one of Kaliningrad's official state of emergency earlier this month there were no extra police on the streets, and certainly no tanks. Shoppers carried on where they had left off the day before, desperately buying salt, sugar, flour and vegetable oil, in preparation for the coming shortages.

It is not surprising that Kaliningrad, Russia's enclave on the Baltic, should be the first region to declare an emergency. Surrounded by Poland and Lithuania, Kaliningrad has no easy access to Russia's dwindling food and fuel reserves.

"All our coal and 80 per cent of our food comes from Poland," said Arkady Mikhailchuk, spokesman for Kaliningrad's governor. "We get heating fuel from Lithuania. It's now three times dearer. We can't afford it, so we have to declare a state of emergency."

With Boris Yeltsin struggling to form a government, Kaliningrad felt justified in acting, but to Moscow it seemed like they were declaring independence.

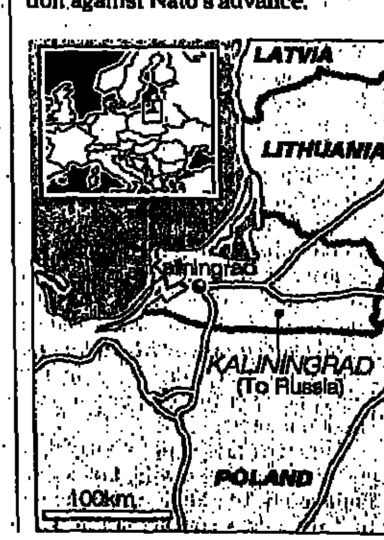
"The citizens should realise that this move is leading to the destruction of the Russian Federation," said Gennady Seleznyov, the Speaker of parliament's lower house. And Igor Farkhutdinov, governor of Sakhalin Island, north of Japan, said it was "the beginning of Russia's dissolution".

After phone calls from the Kremlin pointing out that under the constitution only the president can declare an emergency, Kaliningrad officials had some explaining to do. "Yes, there was a misunderstanding," said Mr Mikhailchuk. "We only meant to declare a state of emergency with regard to our fuel supplies."

Kaliningrad was formerly the heartland of Prussia and anchor of Bismarck's Germany. Kaliningrad — then called Konigsberg — was annexed by the Soviet Union after the second world war. The region became the launch pad for a possible invasion of western Europe.

But now, with Poland set to join Nato and Lithuania hoping to join, Kaliningrad's military is a shadow of its former self. The Baltic fleet rusts in the harbour and officers have not been paid since May.

The Russian defence ministry still sees Kaliningrad as a check to Nato ambitions in the Baltic. But the army and navy presence here is being cut, and remaining units do not have enough fuel to maintain battle readiness. "Mainland" Russia cannot afford its last imperial bastion against Nato's advance.



Youth keep memory of the disappeared alive

Michael McCaughan in Buenos Aires

ON A warm day in the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires, 100 youths dressed as jesters marched up the streets of the Floresta district carrying drums, paint and leaflets.

The troupe came to a halt outside a large empty building surrounded by dozens of riot police. It was the Bel Olimpo, a torture centre during the military rule of 1976-83.

The group set up a sound system in the road, opposite the entrance. "Let the *murga* begin," said one youngster, referring to a popular carnival dance banned during the dictatorship.

The jesters were accompanied by 200 observers, many of them members of an association of sons and daughters of the disappeared known as Hijos — Children for Identity and Justice and Against Forgetting and Silence.

The Hijos carry out "scratches", exposing the homes and detention centres of those who co-ordinated the military regime that ruled Argentina for seven years and killed an estimated 30,000 men and women.

As well as the disappeared, there were an estimated 500 children either kidnapped or born in captivity who were handed over to adoptive parents. Only 59 have been recovered.

"Warning — killer in the neighbourhood," read one leaflet handed out to the residents who gathered to watch the event.

The police watched tensely and filmed from a nearby rooftop, a reminder that the state continues to track dissidents.

For the past 20 years the military has tolerated the Mothers of the Disappeared with open disdain and occasional violence, waiting for age to take its toll of the survivors of the regime. In the past year, however, hundreds of people aged between 15 and 30 have promised to pursue their parents' tormentors "until the day they die", ensuring that the struggle for memory will last.

In the absence of any legal means of punishing the oppressors — the armed forces have secured pardons from weak civilian rulers — Hijos seeks public censure and social ostracism.

At the Olimpo detention centre a group of youths approached the entrance accompanied by a dozen Mothers of the Disappeared, easily identified by their white headscarves.

The *madres* linked arms to form a ring to protect the youths as the police looked on. With the press, crowd and mothers there, nothing could be done.

"We want our stolen brothers and sisters back," read a sign painted in large letters on the road.

The *murga* moved noisily on to its next destination, the home of a former junta leader and navy admiral, Emilio Massera, in a wealthy street in central Buenos Aires. The block of flats was in darkness, but silhouettes could be seen watching from behind curtains.

The "scratches" have had a significant impact on the torturers, who until now have lived open, if low-profile, lives.

Jorge "Tigre" Acosta, one of the regime's most brutal and unrepentant torturers, moved home two days after a visit from Hijos. And a former police chief suddenly lost his amnesia and remembered the location of secret army archives.

"We are not interested in being victims. We are taking up where our parents left off," said Eduardo, a member of Hijos Rosario in the country's second city, one of 26 groups in the national network.

The "scratches" use road signs, paint, leaflets and posters to draw attention to their targets. Road signs warn neighbours and passers-by of the danger ahead. And according to Hijos, jail bars, symbolically placed in front of torturers' homes, "make of every torturer's home a prison cell".



The Week in Britain James Lewis

Lib Dems struggle to carve a political niche

THE LIBERAL Democrats, who held their annual conference in Brighton this week, had much to celebrate. Under the leadership of Paddy Ashdown, they have doubled their representation in Parliament, become the second party in local government and seen many of their ambitions — devolution for Scotland and Wales, PR voting for the European elections, and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law — brought about by New Labour.

The mood, however, was one of distinct unease. The formal business of the assembly was to amend and adopt the raft of new policies set out in the recent mini-manifesto, Moving Ahead. But many activists — notably those from the old Liberal wing of the party — showed increasing concern about the way their policy of "constructive opposition" with Tony Blair's government is turning out in practice.

In Parliament, the party has stifled its criticism of the United States' missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan, and its anger over the Prime Minister's stalling about his promises of open government and a Freedom of Information Act. All it has got in return is a seat for Mr Ashdown on a Cabinet committee on constitutional reform.

Lord (Roy) Jenkins, who led the former Social Democrats and now heads a commission on electoral reform, is expected next month to recommend a "broadly proportional" system of voting rather than the purer, single transferable vote (STV) which the Lib Dems want. But Mr Blair remains "unpersuaded" of the merits of PR and, although he is committed to holding a referendum before the next election, there is no sign of any legislation in the next parliamentary year.

Mr Ashdown will be in trouble if Mr Blair thinks he can win under the existing rules and puts the question of reform on the back burner. If Lord Jenkins's reforms go ahead, he will be in trouble from those who worry about how long the Lib Dems can remain a distinctive political force under a kind of PR system that could lead to coalition government. In either event, this conference could be Mr Ashdown's last as leader.

JONATHAN AITKEN, the disgraced former Conservative cabinet minister, appeared in court for the first time since being charged with conspiracy, perjury and perverting the course of justice. With him was his co-defendant, Said Mohammed Ayas, a former aide to the Saudi Arabian royal family, named as co-conspirator in charges relating to the collapse last year of Mr Aitken's libel action against the Guardian and Granada Television.

Mr Aitken and Mr Ayas are alleged to have submitted to the High Court witness statements which they knew to be false. The statements were about who paid the £1,000 bill run up by Mr Aitken for a stay at the Paris Ritz hotel in 1993, when he was the defence procurement minister.

Although she is not charged, Mr Aitken's estranged wife, Lolicia, was named on the indictment for the first time as a co-conspirator. Committal proceedings are now due to begin next month.

BECAUSE of a shortage of midwives, mothers who give birth in hospital are being denied an epidural to relieve their pain, and some are being discharged just a few hours after their baby is born.

The Royal College of Midwives cited a Bristol hospital as one of those warning all its expectant mothers that they might be discharged six hours after giving birth. The South and Southwest of England and parts of the Northeast and East Anglia were also said to have staffing problems because the number of midwives across the country has fallen by 2,500 in two years, to 32,803.

JOHN MAJOR, the former prime minister, was reported to have sent a £400,000 bill to Prince Charles for acting as legal guardian to his two sons, the Princes William and Harry. The bill was said to have been run up in six months by a team of lawyers employed to advise the princes over their inheritance from Diana, Princess of Wales.

Appointed to protect the financial interests of William, aged 16, and Harry, 14, in negotiations over their mother's will, Mr Major seemingly recruited the top London law firm, Boodle Hatfield, to handle the legal work over Diana's £21 million estate.

Mr Major was said to have had no idea, until the bill was presented, of the costs incurred over legal wrangles to protect the boys' rights in the highly profitable Diana memorabilia industry and an abandoned attempt to avoid death duties.

THE ROYAL NAVY is recruiting sailors who cannot swim, some of whom are so petrified of water that they haven't even the courage to jump into a swimming pool.

This was the lament of Captain Chris Tuffley, director of Naval Physical Training and Sport, who said the service was getting young people who had never even been in a swimming pool. "We then have to teach them, and this is costing us time and money."

Captain Tuffley, who was puzzled as to why youngsters who were scared of water should want to join the Navy, asked the Government to step in to ensure that all young people were taught to swim at school.



The Queen and the Sultan of Brunei at the start of her four-day state visit

Queen clearly enjoys Brunei visit

Nick Hopkins

THE Queen finished her state visit to Brunei last week in much the same mood as she started it, showing a good humour which royal watchers have not seen in years.

A lavish state banquet was the most formal occasion of the trip, but earlier she kept her promise to meet ordinary people at work, and her enthusiasm did not fail, despite the humidity and high temperatures.

"Are you at school?" she asked the Sultan's youngest son, Prince Abdul Mateen.

Without waiting for an answer, the Queen continued enthusiastically: "I'm rather glad I'm not at school. It's all so complicated these days. There's so much to learn, and I can't write any more. I can only write on computers. You can rub things out on them," she said, jabbing her finger against an imaginary keyboard. "It's so simple."

The young prince clearly had not expected to be spoken to and stayed mute, but he wasn't the only one to be caught unawares by the Queen's effusiveness.

Earlier, the royal party was taken to Brunei's largest mosque, the Jame'Asr Hassanil Bolkiah. A gift from the Sultan to the people, it is made entirely of Italian white marble and granite, and has a dome covered in 24-carat gold.

During her walkabout, the Queen, respectfully wearing four stockings rather than shoes, was led into a room where a group of women were being given pre-marriage guidance counselling. The lessons are compulsory and are intended to give couples a thorough understanding of the expectations and responsibilities that follow the Islamic wedding ceremony.

As the Queen was ushered away she made a point of turning to the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook who has recently married for the second time. "We should try something like this at home," she said breezily.

At the weekend she moved on to Malaysia to attend the closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games.

Air pollution 'shrinks' sky

THE sky is falling. Scientists reported last week that the upper atmosphere has shrunk by eight kilometres in the last 38 years, *writes Tim Radford.*

The discovery — a predicted effect of global warming because of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere — confirms that a region of the sky 300 km above the planet can be used as a barometer of change. The world really is closing in, but no one is likely to be hurt.

"It's like sawing 100 feet off the top of Everest: what difference would it actually make?" said Martin Jarvis, of the British Antarctic Survey.

Since scientists discovered the hole in the ozone layer they have been reading cores of ice as if they were tree rings to interpret changes in climate. In 1958 they started examining the thermosphere, the hot windy part of the sky where the air is so electrically charged that radio waves bounce off it.

"It's another warning about what changes to the atmosphere can be caused by human impact," said Dr Jarvis.

Hostages in Chechenia emerge from darkness

Amelia Gentleman, and James Meek in Moscow

THEY spoke in hoarse voices, unused to speaking above a whisper, and they said they thought this day would never come.

The two British hostages held captive in Chechenia for 14 months had an emotional reunion with their families in Britain last Sunday after a dramatic release from their captors.

After 443 days spent held inside a dark, dank cell, Camilla Carr said it was wonderful to see the dawn again. Despite their grey complexion Jon James, aged 38, and Miss Carr, aged 40, were still able to laugh as they described their ordeal.

She said words could not describe her joy at being back home.

Mr James said: "The conditions varied." Miss Carr said: "We were treated pretty well, considering."

She added: "We had no natural light except for one period when there was a tiny window . . . One of the hardest things was the false endings when they said, 'You'll be free in five days, in two days.' That happened nearly every month."

Clearly drawn close by their ordeal, the two often spoke in unison and at one point laughed and said: "There were good days, there were bad days, and there were other days too."

Miss Carr, from Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, and Mr James, from Lydney, Gloucestershire, went to the Chechen capital, Grozny, in April last year as volunteers for the Quaker-funded Little Star Centre, set up to help children traumatised by the war with Russia.

They were kidnapped from their home by six masked gunmen last July. Miss Carr said they felt no bitterness towards their captors. "A lot of them were suffering because there had been this terrible war . . . They were desperate."

A Foreign Office spokesman later said that in accordance with a strongly held British principle no ransom had been paid for their release; but he could not divulge many details about how or where they had been freed.

They had flown from Ingussetia, the state bordering Chechenia, to Moscow. He said the Russian businessman Boris Berezovsky had played an important part in securing their release, and lent a private jet to return them to England.

Police hold 12 over Omagh massacre

John Mullin

POLICE on both sides of the Irish border arrested 12 men on Monday in co-ordinated raids over last month's Omagh bombing, which claimed 29 lives and left 220 injured.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary and Gardai used long-standing anti-terrorist legislation for the move rather than resort to tough new measures introduced after the atrocity. None of the Real IRA's leaders was detained.

Six were held in south Armagh in Northern Ireland. The six held in the Irish Republic were being questioned over the theft of the car used in the bombing.

A maroon Vauxhall Cavalier was stolen on the Thursday before the attack in Carrickmore, 10 miles from Dundalk, Co Louth, stronghold of the Real IRA. The group finally called a ceasefire after the massacre.

The RUC refused to release any details of those held in Northern Ireland. But it is believed that the device used in the attack was put together in south Armagh, and that those arrested were being questioned about that.

The Real IRA, which is led by the IRA's former quartermaster-general, is believed to have been trying to circumvent Gardai intelligence by assembling the bomb in Northern Ireland. Several devices assembled in the Irish Republic had been intercepted this year as they were driven north.

No one has yet been charged over the Omagh bombing on August 15. The RUC is also investigating a series of hoax calls, warning of more bombs in the Co Tyrone market town.

The arrests came as the issue of decommissioning of terrorist arms threatens progress under the Good Friday agreement. There is daily jostling for position on the issue, with the dénouement likely in the next month.

David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, denied that he was preparing to resign as First Minister rather than sit in the power-sharing executive with Sinn Fein.

It is the second time in three months he has quashed such reports. On both occasions he has denied being the source.

Mr Trimble, who received a standing ovation at this week's Liberal Democrats' conference in Brighton, said: "Some of the people making these comments are not the most reliable guide to my thoughts."

But Jeffrey Donaldson, Ulster Unionist MP for Lagan Valley, who is opposed to the agreement, said he believed Mr Trimble's threat was no bluff. Mr Donaldson said the UUP leader was aware of the deep unease within his party, which could split if Sinn Fein is allowed into government before the IRA starts to hand over weapons.

As both the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein argue, the agreement makes no stipulation for IRA decommissioning to be under way before Sinn Fein is eligible for its places in the executive. It states only that parties must use their influence to ensure decommissioning is completed within two years.

Unionists say that a failure to begin handing in weapons would be against the spirit of the agreement. They say there is progress on all other aspects of the deal, particularly on prisoner releases.

● The Government paid out £76,000 to republican prisoners at the Maze prison in recompense for property damaged during cell searches after an IRA escape tunnel was discovered last year, it emerged last week.

Peter Robinson, deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist party was furious. He said they proved the Northern Ireland Office cared more for terrorists than victims.

He contrasted the payments with the difficulties faced by Michelle Williamson, aged 31, in winning compensation after the murder of her parents in the IRA's bombing of the Shankill Road in October 1993. After a five-year wrangle, the NIO told her this month that she qualified only for the reimbursement of her parents' funeral expenses.

Up to 250 prisoners received payouts for damage, loss or confiscation of property. Mr Robinson said one prisoner was awarded more than £3,000. Several got £1,000.

Fury at racist shock tactics

THE Commission for Racial Equality was engulfed in condemnation this week after running an advertising poster campaign branded the most racist in living memory, *writes Janine Gibson.*

Stunned supporters said they could not believe the commission had paid for three different posters suggesting black people were rapists, orangutans and deserving of domination.

But the commission said the campaign was a teaser to test public attitudes about racist stereotyping, asking: "What was worse? This ad, or your failure to complain?"

The three posters appear as ads for bogus companies' products, and do not include the commission's name. One poster for a rape alarm shows a white woman on a bus, a black man in the foreground and the slogan: "Because it's a jungle out there."

One of the campaign posters — designed, said the Commission for Racial Equality, to test attitudes to racist stereotyping — which have been universally condemned PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Asian loses army case

Rory Carroll

AN ASIAN soldier who was beaten by other soldiers, allegedly dressed as Ku Klux Klan members, was not the victim of a racist attack, an army inquiry has ruled.

Iftikhar Mirza, aged 32, has failed to win compensation after a 14-year career which, he said, had revealed institutionalised racism in the armed forces. He is now seeking a judicial review.

He claimed the colour of his skin had led to his being refused promotion, despite twice being the top student in basic training.

He was failed as a cadet after a newly arrived sergeant allegedly said that he was "not going to have a Paki ruining the aesthetics" of his first passing-out parade.

After another training course, Mr Mirza qualified as a rifleman in the 1st battalion of the Royal Green Jackets, based at Tidworth, Wiltshire. But there he allegedly suffered further attacks and insults. Soldiers dressed in white robes burst into his barracks and assaulted him in his bunk while his comrades pretended to sleep. He was injured so badly he was taken into protective custody.

Two soldiers received 60 days' detention and one was discharged after the attack, which happened in 1984 when Mr Mirza was 18.

He left the army in 1995 and lodged a formal complaint of racism. The Ministry of Defence recently told him that a board of inquiry had cleared the army of any wrongdoing, saying no evidence could be found.

An MoD spokesman said: "We did look at [the allegations] but Mr Mirza did not allege the attack by two soldiers was racially motivated, at the time. There's zero tolerance for racism in the forces."

Pet passports get go-ahead

Nicholas Watt

BRITAIN'S stringent anti-rabies laws are to be scrapped in favour of a system of monitoring imported animals with electronic scanners and passports for pets.

Animals arriving in Britain from countries where there is a low risk of rabies will be monitored using implanted microchips. Owners will have to provide documentary proof that their pets have been immunised against rabies, and the animals may also have to undergo blood tests.

The changes will mean the end of the mandatory six months' quarantine for animals imported from the European Union.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said: "The Government wants to free up the system while ensuring that Britain remains rabies-free."

A 10-strong panel of independent government advisers recommended changes to loosen the laws. But the panel, which was chaired by Professor Ian Kennedy of University College London, recommended strong safeguards.

Tough regulations will remain in force against "problem countries" where there is a high risk of rabies. These include countries in eastern Europe, North and South America, Africa and east Asia. The last major rabies scare in Britain was in 1969. In 1983 an Irish wolfhound which arrived from the United States died from rabies in quarantine.

Chris Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, has been based in France because he does not want to subject his dogs to quarantine, and has campaigned for the change in the law.

He recently said that pet lovers "must either abandon their pets or shut them up for six months at great cost with a lot of emotional stress".

In Brief

DEBORAH PARRY, the British nurse freed after being held for murder in Saudi Arabia, is being investigated by her professional body after starting work at a Surrey hospital. Meanwhile her colleague Lucille McLauchlan has signed a book deal for her life story.

AN INQUIRY has been launched after Stuart Lindsay, a deputy head teacher in Leeds, admitted a series of rapes and sexual assaults on children with learning difficulties.

THREE scoutmasters and a notorious paedophile, Brian Turner, have been convicted of child sex offences after a police investigation uncovered a paedophile ring which had infiltrated a breakaway scout association.

THE longest-running police operation targeting a single criminal family since the Krays scored a success when a member of the notorious Adams family was jailed for 7½ years for masterminding a drugs empire.

A NEW scanning technique could provide evidence to back the torture claims of some asylum seekers, according to the Lancet medical journal.

THE MAIL on Sunday's editor, Jonathan Holborrow, was unceremoniously sacked from the newspaper while on holiday.

A BOY aged 14 was given a life sentence for the attempted rape of the mother of a former schoolmate.

BP HAS pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent by 2010.

CHRIS Woodhead has been reappointed as chief inspector of schools. His 46 per cent pay rise provoked criticism from teaching unions, who have been told to exercise pay restraint.

THE Royal Opera House has appointed the American Michael Kaiser as executive director. Meanwhile the Arts Council, a grant-giving body, is to cut staff to 150 from 322.

THE German-born painter Madeleine Strindberg has won the £30,000 Jerwood painting prize.

GOMEZ, a five-man group from Merseyside, won the prestigious Technics Mercury Music prize for their debut album.

SUSAN BARRANTES, the mother of the Duchess of York, has died in a car crash in Argentina at the age of 61.

THE ACTRESS Patricia Hayes has died at the age of 88.

Social workers face new rules

David Brindle

THE Government is to take powers to force social workers to deliver a new deal for 51,000 children in care after inspectors reported a "sorry picture" of repeated failure across the country.

The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, read the riot act to local authority leaders at a closed conference in London on Monday. The message was that councils have been given every chance to do right by the most vulnerable children in society, but have failed.

Social services departments will be brought under central monitoring and required to meet targets for improving the lot of children in care. Councillors will be told they will be accountable if things go wrong.

Denise Platt, chief inspector of social services, said: "If you take responsibility for a child, you are not expected to exercise your duties in the half-baked way we have found in many cases."

The tough approach has been triggered by inspections of 27 English social services authorities, none of which received a clean bill of health. All said they had proper safeguards in place for the welfare of children.

The inspections followed concern about safeguards in the wake of emerging revelations of widespread abuse of youngsters in children's homes in the past, and the issue of an ultimatum to authorities to ensure no recurrence of such behaviour in homes.

The report of the inspections concludes: "None of the authorities could be fully confident about the services offered to all the children they looked after."

Every authority was found to have problems ensuring compliance with its policies. Some of the worst councils inspected have already been brought to book: Ealing, in west London, is seeking a new director of social services after inspectors warned that it had a "culture of hopelessness", with "potentially catastrophic" consequences for children in care.

Under the new programme, Quality Protects, all authorities will be subject to central monitoring of services for children in care. They will be required to draw up plans to show how they intend to achieve quantifiable improvements in indicators such as the number of cases of "significant harm", the choice available for children in terms of fostering or residential placements, and the number of different placements they are forced to go through.

A team of the brightest and best workers in children's services is to be assembled by the Government to spearhead its drive to deliver a new deal for youngsters in care.

The team, which will include experts seconded from education, health and the voluntary sector as well as social services, will aim to ensure that local authorities meet tough targets for improving the lot of the 51,000 children in care in England.

Ministers are warning that failure to hit the targets, part of a promised "top-to-bottom transformation" of children's services, will not be tolerated. The health minister responsible for social services, Paul Boateng, said: "The consequences will be grave. This Government will not hesitate to act in order to protect children and other vulnerable people from the consequences of failure by their local authority social services department."

Mr Dobson said the funding — on a payment-by-results basis — would come from a "substantial" slice of the £3 billion he had won for social services under the comprehensive spending review.

Too many young people were cut adrift at age 16, Mr Dobson said. "No shoulder to cry on. Nowhere to get your washing done . . . No mother or father to touch for a tenner when you are skint. No place where you really belong. The list is endless. And it's a disgrace."

The initiative received a cautious welcome from local authority groups. Roy Taylor, president of the Association of Directors of Social Services, said: "It's a pretty daunting agenda, with a vast array of objectives, and it's going to take a lot of hard work.

"We will need something to back us up so that, when push comes to shove, the education departments and health services are required to work with social services."



Gloomy outlook . . . Mr Blair during his visit to the Fujitsu plant last week PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID CHESKIN

Blair pledges help for the jobless

Peter Hetherington

TONY BLAIR last week braved the wrath of voters facing the dole with a tough warning of hard times ahead in the country's industrial heartlands as the world economic crisis bites deeper.

The Government could do little to influence the "twists and turns of world markets", he said, but it could cushion the blow by offering help to people thrown out of work. "We can do something to help the hurt . . . to help people who I know will be determined to help themselves."

Visiting the Fujitsu microchip plant in his Co Durham seat two weeks after it was announced it was to close with the loss of 600 jobs, he hinted at more redundancies and factory closures caused by the international economic downturn.

"Let us not kid ourselves — in certain sectors there will be an impact," he said. But he cautioned against exaggerating the depth of the crisis, pointing out that job losses at Fujitsu, and the nearby Siemens microchip plant — where another 100 jobs will be lost — were symptomatic of over-supply problems rather than a recession.

His relatively upbeat assessment was supported by the latest jobless figures. They showed that the number of people out of work and claiming benefit fell by 16,400 in August to a new 18-year low of 1,316,800 — 4.6 per cent of the workforce.

But manufacturing is suffering because it is exposed to the weakness of demand abroad caused by the high pound and the global financial crisis. This has led to fears of mounting job losses in the country's old industrial heartlands over the coming months.

Earlier Mr Blair launched an £800 million, three-year New Deal for Communities programme, underpinned by a devastating report from the Government's Social Exclusion Unit on the deteriorating state of "two nations" Britain.

Mr Blair was at pains not to raise expectations. Acknowledging the failure of past initiatives costing thousands of millions of pounds, Mr Blair instead offered longer-term programmes stretching well into the next century.

After 15 months of New Labour this marked what one senior aide described as the best of big government, offering not only a critique of where the country had gone wrong but also a solution.

Centrepiece of the programme will be the initial concentration of the New Deal in 17 "pathfinder" districts, from Newcastle and Middlesbrough to Liverpool, Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham, Brighton and four London boroughs.

Selected by the Government, they will have to make bids speedily for community-based programmes to John Prescott's Department of the Environment — embracing not only housing improvement, and selective demolition, but also plans to improve education and health, create jobs and training opportunities, and reduce crime.

But the Social Exclusion report goes much further by calling for 18 special action teams, each headed by a so-called "champion" minister. As well as civil servants drawn from 10 Whitehall departments, they will include many outside specialists — and their task, under the co-ordination of the Exclusion Unit, will be to tackle the most intractable problems in neighbourhoods around the country.

Five broad themes have been identified. These range from "investigating innovative approaches" to getting people into work, to providing a watertight framework for dealing with anti-social neighbours, while attempting to address the problem of the growing number of empty council homes.

Other themes include motivating children at school and providing the poorest people with access for the services the middle classes take for granted. Local shops on problem estates often charge 60 per cent more than supermarkets. Yet tenants are often trapped with no cars.

The renewal task is daunting. Surveys suggest there are 3,000 neighbourhoods in England alone with deep-seated problems of run-down or derelict housing. But 44 local authority districts have the worst problems. They contain 85 per cent of the country's most deprived wards. Compared with the rest of the country, they have two-thirds more unemployment, 1½ times the underage pregnancy rate, extremely low educational attainment and mortality ratios 30 per cent higher than elsewhere. The level of vacant housing is also 1½ times above average.

The report pulls no punches about widening inequality. Between 1979 and 1995, net incomes (after housing costs) of the richest 10 per cent grew by almost 70 per cent; the poorest tenth saw their incomes drop by 8 per cent.

Monsanto wins injunction

Paul Brown

A BLANKET High Court injunction preventing anyone interfering with 60 sites in Britain planted with genetically engineered crops owned by the Monsanto company was granted last week.

In one of the most wide-ranging injunctions granted by a British court, Judge Timothy Walker said anyone inciting people to pull up crops would be liable to prison. The injunction was aimed at a group called Genetic Snowball, which planned a demonstration last weekend in Cambridge against similar crops.

It named six defendants, five women who pulled up some Monsanto plants in a field in Oxfordshire on July 4, and the group's press officer, Andrew Wood, who wrote a release about it for newspapers.

The six would be made liable for damages should anyone else in Britain attack Monsanto crops in the name of Genetic Snowball.

One of the women, Katherine Tulip, a solicitor, said: "This is so wide-ranging it is astonishing. There is no membership of Genetic Snowball, so we are liable for the actions of people who we do not even know who use the name. Andrew has been named as a co-conspirator of ours even though he has never touched a Monsanto crop. It is an attack on press officers telling newspapers about matters of public interest."

She said the six were seeking legal advice and intended to go back to court.

Davies backs down over ballot-rigging

Nicholas Watt

A SURPRISE note of harmony was struck last weekend in the acrimonious election battle for Labour's National Executive Committee, when the most prominent leftwing candidate accepted the leadership's denial of ballot-rigging.

Liz Davies, who is challenging Blairite supporters in this month's election, said that accused party officers had shown nothing more than incompetence after it emerged that voting papers were sent to 50,000 lapsed members. Under rules introduced at last year's conference, members in arrears for six months or more do not have "any rights to participate in party decision-making".

Ms Davies, who is standing on the Grassroots Alliance slate, said: "I do not think there has been an attempt to rig the ballot. But there are questions about the competence of party officers."

However, Tom Sawyer, the party's general secretary, said there had been "some confusion" over the new rules because they were only meant to apply to the selection of candidates for Westminster, Strasbourg, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. He added that he had been advised by lawyers that Labour would have been open to legal challenge if it had not sent the ballot papers because it had not notified people they had been disenfranchised.

But the Prime Minister took heart last weekend when his two chosen candidates swept to victory in the party ballots to lead Labour in Scotland and Wales.

Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, won with 99.8 per cent of the vote. In Wales, Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, beat off leftwing backbencher Rhodri Morgan with 68.2 per cent of the vote.

Government fights drug firms' 'greed'

David Hencke and Sarah Boseley

THE Government is facing a head-on collision with the multinational drug companies by deciding to scrap the voluntary agreement on the amounts the companies can charge the National Health Service for medicines and forcing them to peg prices through legally binding contracts.

The move, to be announced in the Queen's Speech on November 24, follows revelations in the Guardian that some companies have been openly flouting the present deal, adding millions of pounds to NHS bills. Ministers are furious that pharmaceutical giants who are party to the voluntary scheme have sold on their drug rights to smaller firms, who hike prices to the NHS by as much as 2,000 per cent.

The decision to tear up the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) will cause uproar within the drug industry. The scheme, which has been in existence for 41 years, has allowed companies to charge what they like for new drugs in acknowledgment of their investment in research — as long as the total does not breach a profits ceiling set by the Government. Even so, the UK's drugs bill is now estimated to stand at more than £6 billion a year.

The companies have done well out of it. As well as making substantial profits, they have been able to use the NHS as a showcase for new medicines that are then sold throughout the £180 billion global market. But ministers consider that the companies' greed has wrecked the cosy arrangement that is still negotiated behind closed doors.

The drug industry has underestimated ministers' disenchantment with the scheme. Hard on the heels of the price hikes came the Viagra furore. Pfizer, the manufacturer, has dropped its initial demand of £10 a tablet to £4.84, but has publicly said it will go no lower in spite of the £50-150 million that prescriptions could cost the health service.

The proposed NHS bill will be used to make these changes, and close any loopholes that are exposed by a review of the system.

Little progress has been made in the PPRS negotiations, which are conducted for the drug companies by the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI). The government decision pre-empts a move by the American companies who manufacture in Britain and sell to the NHS and have in the past agreed to be bound by the PPRS.

A confidential document from the lobbying company GPC Market Access reveals that Merck, Sharp and Dohme, a key member of the American Pharmaceutical Group, was prepared to threaten to withdraw from the PPRS, which would have put severe pressure on the Government. GPC Market Access is working for many of the big drug companies, including Pfizer, Glaxo-Wellcome and Novartis.

Earlier this year GPC Market Access attempted to arrange a face-to-face meeting between the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Vincent Lawton, managing director of Merck, Sharp and Dohme, but this move was blocked by Downing Street.

Now the lobbying company is trying to persuade the American ambassador, Phil Lader, to host a meeting for the 13 companies in the American Pharmaceutical Group to meet the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson.

Met to probe handling of 'murder' case

Amelia Gentleman

THE Metropolitan Police is to launch an inquiry into the handling of a botched investigation into the suspected murder of a talented black musician, found burning in a London street, after an inquest found that he had been unlawfully killed.

Michael Menson died of multiple organ failure caused by his burns in February last year. Despite his repeated claims that he had been racially attacked, police initially assumed he had set fire to himself in an attempt to commit suicide, and failed to launch an investigation.

The inquiry will be carried out by a chief constable from another force and supervised by the Police Complaints Authority. A PCA spokesman said the move was in response to an expected complaint from Mr Menson's family about the police handling of the case.

Earlier, Scotland Yard had admitted in a letter to the Menson family that senior officers had made serious mistakes, but no apology was offered. After an internal review, three of the four officers concerned — an inspector, a detective inspector and a detective chief inspector — have retired or are on the point of retiring, making them immune to disciplinary action.

A police spokesman said the fourth had been "given advice", adding that no further disciplinary action would be taken against any of the police involved.

After the inquest, John Townsend, a deputy assistant commissioner, expressed his "regret" that the police had initially assumed that Mr Menson had set light to himself. He said he regretted the officers' decision to retire because it meant he was unable to decide whether they should be disciplined.

● The Metropolitan Police commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, last week accepted that aspects of the investigation into the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence could be perceived as evidence of a subliminal culture of racism in the force. But he denied that the service was institutionally racist.

Inappropriate behaviour?

ANOTHER week. Another 2,800 pages of testimony. Another 243 minutes of videotaped evidence with the most powerful government on earth transfixed and paralysed. Another barrage of excruciatingly intrusive questions and revelations. And at the end of Monday's four hours of President Clinton's filmed testimony before the grand jury, the Dow Jones index rose, and the nation shrugged its shoulders and went back to work.

Republican spinners had tried to persuade us that the video would be devastating. We would see a president lose his temper, rip his microphone off and storm out. We would see him in a Nixon sweat as he squirmed, wriggled and lied. Kenneth Starr may have winged him. This video would kill him.

How wrong. There were no storm-outs, no profane obscenities from the presidential lips, no outbursts. Mr Clinton was mostly composed and dignified — though there were occasional glints of frustration and controlled anger, particularly at the Paula Jones case, which was dismissed in April. He frankly confessed to behaviour with Monica Lewinsky that was inappropriate, wrong and intimate. He did not think it was appropriate to go into more detail than that, and he refused to do so. He laid much emphasis on his right to privacy, and that of his family.

Against that, he was undoubtedly evasive — and, in some instances, dishonest — when pressed about the specific details of his sexual encounters with Ms Lewinsky. He twisted language, split hairs and picked at legal nits in a way that was both wearisome and risible. There was much to deplore, but, on balance, more to admire in the president's performance. Most of the prizes for inappropriate behaviour went to Mr Starr and his team.

Which leaves us precisely where? We have yet to hear a squeak about the original subjects of Mr Starr's investigations: on Whitewater, Travelgate and Filegate there is still silence. What we have is a priapic president who lies about sex. We have a Speaker with presidential ambitions of his own, pulling unseen strings in a capital city notoriously insulated from the heartbeat of the nation. We have a Democratic party fearing meltdown in the coming mid-term elections, reluctant to unite behind its president and wishing the whole problem would just go away. It is a disastrous and potentially dangerous recipe.

There are two possible solutions to breaking this unhappy deadlock — both in the president's own hands. The first would be to resign. He could tell his fellow Americans that he does not deserve impeachment. He could admit to having been foolish and dishonest — but that his lies were about sex rather than power or money. But he could say that he wishes to spare his country the agonies and indignities of drawing this grotesque tragi-comedy out any further. It would be, in the short term at least, a victory for his enemies, but the immediate nightmare would be over. The other solution open to Mr Clinton is for him once and for all to abandon his pinhead sophistry about what constitutes sexual relations. He could do it before the House judiciary committee or he could do it on television: "Monica and I had a sexual relationship. It wasn't clever, and it wasn't clever to lie about it, but it happened. Back me or sack me, but let's move on." Calling the Republicans' bluff in this manner may be the only way to break the gridlock.

ETA must start talking

THE SPANISH government's sceptical reaction to the ceasefire announced last week by ETA, the Basque separatist movement, is understandable. It worries whether the offer of an indefinite truce is a trick. It points out that ETA is not proposing to surrender its guns. And it argues that ETA has not abandoned its aims of creating a sovereign state.

Yet, however understandable, suspicious caution is not the right response. The potential significance of the ETA truce is truly momentous, and it needs to be greeted with generous sensitivity. The best-informed observers have seen the truce germinating for months in the wake of Northern Ireland's peace process, whose spillover ETA itself has acknowledged.

All armed struggles experience a well-proven dynamic. After years of conflict people reach a point where the desire to be free of bombs, violence and insecurity becomes all-pervasive. It first affects those who support the movement's aims from medium or long range. Eventually it hits at the movement's core. The toll of long jail sentences on arrested gunmen inevitably forces serious reflection. Has enough been achieved to warrant a change of strategy? If the central tactic is terrorism, does continuation lose more ground than it gains?

The comparison with Ulster should not be overdone. Far from being under direct rule from the centre for years, the Basque country enjoys one of the most generous forms of regional autonomy in Europe. Its government is in Basque hands. There is a Basque police force, and Basques long ago escaped from the lack of full civil rights that galvanises much of the republican movement in Ulster. All this has made ETA's case seem increasingly irrelevant to a new generation.

ETA's recognition of new realities might have led the Spanish government to meet the ceasefire with triumphalism, seeing it as a sign of weakness, almost as an admission of defeat. But this would be worse than the current reaction of caution, although the consequence of either attitude might be the same — a refusal to enter any form of talks with Herri Batasuna, ETA's political wing.

Northern Ireland's peace agreement has shown that any government must have a talks process into which former gunmen can be coaxed. They need a ladder to come down, and it must not take too long to be put in place. The momentum that turns a ceasefire into peace does not develop spontaneously of its own accord. It requires two sides to build it.

There is no Third Way

ONLY THE mean-minded would have begrudged Tony Blair his trip to New York to attend Hillary Clinton's Third Way conference. Cerebral activity from serving politicians is unusual. So what if it was squeezed in between photo-calls: the sight of national leaders reflecting on the state of a troubled world is one warmly to behold. And to those who say that the Prime Minister should be in Spennymoor worrying about factory closures, there's a ready reply. During the past few weeks "globalisation" talk has come to sound a lot less vacuous as controls on movements of capital and currency have been broached. If future jobs in Durham are going to be any more secure, there are going to have to be a lot more international jamborees like this one.

Which is not to invest Third Way with any robustness as a political idea. In his new book Professor Anthony Giddens devotes 150-odd pages to it without really showing that it amounts to much more than a description of what modern social democrats are actually doing. The fact they are worrying about new things (the environment, family breakdown) as well as income inequality and other things they always cared about does not justify the moniker. Besides, whoever coined it this time round lacks a sense of history. "When I was a lad," Felipe González remarked sardonically, "Franco's was the Third Way" — and he wasn't the only fascist to see political space "between capitalism and communism". If the Third Way is about bringing social democracy up to date, Prof Giddens might, if only for the sake of disconfirmatory experimental evidence, have asked someone to speak in New York for the decidedly pinker French variety of social democracy. Clinton barely registers as a centrist, let alone a leftwinger. The health care reform débâcle showed that, as reformers, the Clintons are a busted flush.

So, forget the Third Way — but do seek counsel and stimulus abroad in addressing the common problems of modern, progressive government. Can governments influence sex, parenting and lifestyles that affect the public space; what kind of new, international order is needed to regulate turbo-capitalism; how can the growth of awareness of the physical environment be accelerated in order to support the dramatic changes in policy needed now; how can people be persuaded to take part in public affairs when their interests seem to be narrowing to private and individual spheres?

Of course there is no global template. If Mr Blair's trip was a sign that he is still questing, anxious, intellectually alive, well and good. If he was seeking some fixed formula it will be a sign that he is, after all, just another conservative.

Germany in thrall to its citizens in the east

Martin Woollacott

THE last two German elections have been won in the east, the votes of the former citizens of the communist German Democratic Republic bringing a famous victory for Helmut Kohl in the first and just saving him from defeat in the second.

Perhaps even before that, in contemplating the dominance of the Christian Democratic Union over the years, it could be true to say that the anti-communist edge that the German conservatives possessed over their Social Democratic rivals of the SPD meant that many earlier elections were also won, if not in the east, then because of the east.

In the third election since unification, and eight years after the GDR was declared dead, the east continues to hold Germany in thrall. It is not only that Chancellor Kohl has tried to call up the antique menace of the Reds by suggesting that the SPD and the former East German communists, the PDS, might somehow end up running Germany together. Nor is it simply that eastern votes will certainly be critical when Germany goes to the polls this weekend. The east has skewed the already wobbly cog wheels of German politics, those which should enable the two major parties to ease themselves into power with the help of reliable junior partners.

It has become, in addition, the not so secret laboratory of a different German model — the Germany of lower wages, lower benefits, and reduced job security which most of the business élite believe must replace the old West Germany's "over-generous" and "inflexible" model. In other words, western Germany's social and economic fate may now be under preparation in the east. The lost eastern workers' state, with its guarantee of job, home, and holiday, remains as a ghost pointing a shaking and accusatory finger at unfeeling authorities and employers.

Finally, the merger of the two Germanies has produced the result that some predicted in 1990, which is that a united Germany, rather than being more interested in the outside world and readier to act in it, is so preoccupied with its own problems that it sees most international issues only through the dark spectacles of its own difficulties.

The German political system is like a Rubik cube at which the parties and the voters push and pull until, after all the votes are in, the segments suddenly fall into place. The possible results of this election range from the reconfirmation in power of the present conservative coalition of the CDU and the Free Democrats, to a CDU-led "grand coalition" with the SPD, to an SPD-led grand coalition, to a coalition of the SPD and the Greens. The point here is that it is eastern votes that are vital. If the CDU fails to pick up the votes in the east for which it is hoping — it has saturated its constituency in the west — it will either go into opposition or, at best, stay in government in an SPD-led coalition. Irony of ironies, even this last possibility may be dependent on the success of the ex-communists, for if they squeeze into the Bundestag they will make it more difficult for the SPD to form a coalition with the Greens.

Whatever happens in this election, the eastern effect has reinforced other developments pushing German politics toward a technical crisis. Neither the FDP nor the Greens have made any permanent headway in the east, which means that their chances of giving a hand to senior partners are reduced.

This also increases the possibility that one or both of these catalyst parties could get less, in this or future elections, than the 5 per cent of the national vote necessary for representation in the parliament. One is the natural partner of the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the CSU, the other the natural partner of the SPD. Without them the two main political forces, neither of which have more than a remote chance of an absolute majority, would have no alternative but to govern with each other in unwieldy and arguably undemocratic grand coalitions.

The eastern effect has consolidated two other political forces — the PDS as a regional party channelling eastern grievances; and the three far right parties who are fighting among themselves to pick up the potentially large neo-Nazi vote in the east.

While both main parties talk in Bonn of essentially similar reforms of the tax system and the labour market, it is arguable that the real social reckoning for Germany is being calculated in the east. Here firms pay less and do less for workers than the law lays down. In east Germany and in eastern Europe generally, German business has a field of action that will allow it to put great pressure on any German government to go further in reducing wages and welfare than it or the voters want to go.

HELMUT KOHL promised east Germany years ago that it would blossom under his rule, and it is true that the once open countryside has sprouted a crop of fine-looking shopping centres. But for the huge numbers out of work these shrines have no relevance. Those who have done well in the east are also bitter. They resent the fate of fellow east Germans who have fallen on hard times.

The discontents of the west and the east may overlap. They have not yet merged. But graffiti, the advertising of the underclass, has united eastern and western Germany. They provide a counterpoint to the election posters which proclaim such slogans as "Germany — World Class" over Mr Kohl's portrait. But this Germany is not as open to that world as it might be. The constant stress on avoiding refugee flows into Germany that accompanies almost every official statement on Kosovo, for instance, exemplifies this. So do Mr Kohl's bouts of bad temper over such issues as European Union financing and what he sees as unwarranted EU interference in the German economy.

This is the Germany that the political writer Peter Schneider predicted in 1990 would sometimes say to foreigners: "We Germans have enough of our own problems." The other Germany, the responsible state and powerful economy, is still there. Both are the legacy of Mr Kohl, the leader who gathered in the east but could not overcome the contradictions to which unification gave rise.

Quick, Let's Get Out of This Mess

OPINION
Geneva Overholser

"OH, WHAT a sorry mess we're in, and how will we ever get out of it?" Pollsters aren't asking this question. But if they did, 98 percent of Americans would respond: "Strongly agree."

We have a president whose private behavior falls short of the most minimal standards of morality, wisdom or prudence. We put him in office at the height of our national experiment with criminalizing everything. The White House hires an intern whose idea of introducing herself to the president is showing him her underwear.

And, hungrily pecking through the keyhole — stymied by those years, those millions, spent futilely — is Kenneth Starr, independent counsel. Like an adolescent confronted for the first time with a naked woman, Starr seems to have forgotten all other charges in the great lushness of the subject — SEX! Burdened by legal responsibilities, he is compelled by Clinton's mendacity to share all the shocking details!

People always said that if all this turned out to be just about sex, they didn't want to know about it. But Starr put out a report that is just about sex — and made it so graphic that it can't be ignored.

There is also the cover-up. But here, the cover-up *is* the crime. However weighty the pronouncements of critics, however painful the parsings of Clinton's lawyers (David Kendall must wake up feeling like he's in a straitjacket), this report is about having sex and lying about it. Here is a combination as old as Methuselah. And it cannot be what the Founders imagined as a third offense when they formulated the impeachment language in the Constitution: "Treason, Bribery or other High Crimes and Misdemeanors." (Treason, Bribery or Hanky-Panky with Cover-Up?)

Nonetheless, Congress is moving forward solemnly on a process likely to produce anything but a quick end. If the House votes for impeachment, the Senate may well be engaged in the trial next summer. For, as the spokesman for the Republican National Committee, Mike Collins, says: "This is not about polls. This is about getting to the truth."

How much more of this particular truth do we need? How many more locked-up boxes of Starr's idea of an important revelation? How many more members of Congress forced to confess infidelities?

Is it to strengthen our national moral mettle that we'd pursue such truths? So believes our self-appointed national guru of ethics, William Bennett. His new book, The Death Of Outrage, scolds us all for not being angry enough at Clinton. But Bennett's idea of a higher plane seems to involve casting the first stone as hard as possible and making sure everyone notices. Not only is this inadequate to the complexity of what confronts us. It is less ethically sound than the tradition Bennett so despises, the "live and let live" philosophy Americans sought for so long to hold to.

But that ethic is threatened by the degree of Clinton's recklessness and the milieu of unrestrained prosecutorialism. Now the public is confronted with repeated apologies from their president, who didn't sound contrite enough, early enough, to take care of this *expeditiously*, and so now seems to be doing it *expediently* instead.

The apologies lack punch. Is it because of those lawyers behind him talking strict legal truthfulness even as he talks sin? Or because we've been betrayed so much, the lip-biting has worn thin?

Even so, betrayal, for all its sting, does not make the public want Clinton's head — or at least not as much as they want, quite simply, to be governed. If Clinton's defilement of the presidency cries out for rebuke, and if the nation desperately needs closure — and both are true — then censure, a formal declaration of it from Congress, is the fitting answer.

Alas, Congress isn't inclined. For, as New York Republican Michael P. Forbes said, "To make some quick, interim judgment would short-circuit the process."

Imagine the relief, if we could "short-circuit" this endless-seeming process and — besotted as we are with this manner of "truths" — hear no more of them. And move on to taking care of the nation's business.

The best thing citizens could do now is to make unmistakably clear to Congress their desire for an ending. A quick, strong rebuke of Clinton would do more than all the procedures and revelations Congress can come up with to rid us of this sorry mess.

THE GARBAGEMEN ARE HERE... THAT'S STRANGE.
WHY IS THAT STRANGE?
THESE GUYS ARE DELIVERING THE GARBAGE.
USUALLY THE GARBAGEMEN PICK UP THE GARBAGE..
MORE AND MORE STARR REPORT

Too High a Price for Hanky-Panky

COMMENT
William Raspberry

WHILE we're busily worrying over whether President Clinton can avoid impeachment or survive, unimpeached, in an increasingly untenable situation, I've been wrestling with another question I think is worth some consideration: How did we get here?

There are two general answers to the question, and the answer you believe to be the pertinent one is a fair proxy for how you feel about what ought to happen now. (Perhaps typically, I believe both, which may explain my own confused thoughts.) One answer begins with Clinton himself: his penchant for risky behavior, his willingness to lie and obfuscate and (as the special prosecutor's report would have it) perjure his way out of the resultant jams.

The other answer begins with an overzealous prosecutor, embarrassed at his inability to find the crimes he was hired to find, determined to get Clinton on something. The sex scandal served that purpose quite nicely.

I know the distinction lawyers must make: That Clinton will fall, if he falls, not for illicit sex but for perjury, subornation of perjury and obstruction of justice. But that supposes that he could have survived the sex if he'd told the truth about it: Well, yes, I repeatedly had sex with an intern less than half my age, did it right there in the Oval Office and with some fairly "unorthodox" twists.

That would have gotten him off the hook? No, I think we need to pay some attention to how the question of his sexual behavior came to be asked in the first place.

The analogy will fail, but think of a cop who's out to get you and who gets a tip that there's a box in your den that contains evidence that you've filed fraudulent tax returns for the past several years. But the tip isn't good enough to get a judge to issue a warrant, so the cop decides to just bust into your house on his own. The neighbors start yelling at the cop that he can't do that. He breaks in anyway. The box turns out to contain useless papers, but — What's that? Blood trickling from under the bathroom door you've been standing in front of? A dead body in the bathroom?

Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation isn't warrantless — his ever-expanding charter has let him barge into rooms never contemplated when the former Bush administration solicitor general was appointed in August 1994. But I think a lot of us were like the neighbors in my analogy, yelling that he had no business looking into the intensely private matter of Clinton's sex life.

But he looked anyway, and the tawdry evidence he found — evidence eventually confessed to — presents us with the equivalent of a dead body in the bathroom. We may feel strongly that the questions about sex between consenting adults should never have been asked. But when the sex is owned up to, and when it turns out (in Starr's allegation, at least) to be particularly gross, we can't pretend it's not there.

We've learned things we never wanted to know, things we considered none of our business. But we've learned them now, and while some of us former Clinton supporters are furious and disgusted with him for putting us in this situation, we aren't sure what to do about it. The loss of a presidency, whether through resignation or impeachment, seems a very stiff price to pay for sexual hanky-panky and the lying that usually accompanies it.

Some, critics and friends alike, say Clinton brought it all on himself, and I absolutely agree with that. But we shouldn't forget that a determined prosecutor with a single suspect, unlimited time and money and an endlessly expansible charter can nearly always find something. If Clinton hadn't been Tripped up by tape-recorded confessions of Monica Lewinsky, can we doubt that Starr would have found something else, sexual or otherwise?

I offer no defense of Clinton's behavior, but I can't get it out of my head that Whitewater, the investigation that Ken Starr was hired to undertake, began with the purchase (by the Clintons and the McDougals) of 200 acres in the northern Arkansas Ozarks. That was in 1978. Monica Lewinsky was five years old.

Steep Drop in Youngsters' Sexual Activity

Barbara Vobejda

AFTER two decades of climbing steadily, the proportion of American high school students who have had sexual intercourse has fallen 11 percent during the 1990s, according to a new federal study released last week. Young people are also more likely to use condoms and less likely to have multiple sex partners.

The steep drops mean that for the first time this decade, fewer than half of the nation's high school students say they have had sex, with the most dramatic decline among boys. The new survey data shows that just under 49 percent of young males reported that they were sexually experienced, down from over 57 percent in 1991.

For girls, the figure was just under 48 percent, down from about 51 percent.

The findings, combined with other recent studies showing fewer teen pregnancies and a decline in teen births in every state, point to a remarkable change in behavior among the nation's young people that researchers attribute to the growing barrage of messages from schools, community groups, churches and families urging them to delay sex and protect themselves against AIDS.

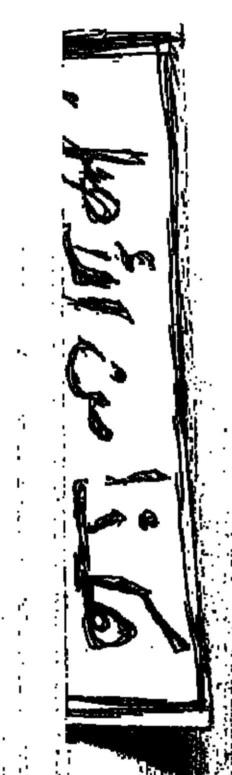
"It is truly good news for all of us involved in the lives of America's teenagers," said Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala.

The study, known as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, is designed to measure the extent to which high school students are in danger of contracting AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases or becoming pregnant. The most recent results indicate that because they are delaying sex, using condoms and having fewer partners, teens are at less risk than they would have been if the patterns of the '70s and '80s had continued.

The biennial study was conducted last year among more than 16,000 high school students of all ages, who complete written questionnaires asking them about a range of sexual activity.

It also found that, among those who were sexually active, nearly 57 percent had used a condom the last time they had intercourse, compared to about 46 percent in 1991.

Over the same period, the number reporting that they had had four or more sexual partners over their lifetime decreased from nearly 19 percent to 16 percent.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 27 1998

Supporters of the extreme-right National Democratic party march in the eastern German city of Rostock last weekend. A growing number of Germans are anti-immigrant PHOTOGRAPH: REINHARD KRAUSE

Germans Grapple With Race

William Drozdiak in Frankfurt

EVER since 13th-century Emperor Frederick II bestowed special protection on all foreign merchants who ventured here with their wares, this ancient trading crossroads on the Main River has attracted people the world over with its allure of prosperity.

In the second half of this century, the guest workers who came from Turkey, Greece and Italy to help rebuild Germany from the ruins of World War II have been joined since the fall of the Berlin Wall nine years ago by tens of thousands of Poles, Iranians, Yugoslavs and Russians. The number of foreigners — meaning people of non-German ancestry — has soared to the point where they now make up about 30 percent of Frankfurt's population of 652,000, according to the latest figures.

The ethnic transformation of this affluent banking center — it will soon host the European Central Bank — vividly demonstrates the changing human face of Germany as the nation's blue-eyed and blond Teutonic stereotype undergoes a "rainbow revolution."

"Whether you like it or not, Germany is already a very ethnically diverse society and is getting more so by the day," said Jutta Ebeling, Frankfurt's superintendent for multicultural affairs, in an interview.

But not everybody is pleased by the trend. A growing number of Germans say they fear immigrants have become a menace to their nation's identity. A recent survey by the Forsa polling institute showed that 52 percent of German voters think there are too many foreigners and that 10 percent would consider voting for an extreme right-wing party with a xenophobic platform.

The message has not been lost on Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his Social Democratic challenger, Gerhard Schroeder, as they scramble for votes in the September 27 election. Claiming that Germany's borders have become too porous, both candidates have escalated their promises to crack down on would-be immigrants and deport all foreigners who commit crimes.

At campaign rallies, especially in the east where hatred of foreigners is most evident, Kohl hammers away at his claim that "Germany must not become a land of immigrants" like the United States and must remain rooted in its traditions as "a bastion of Christian civilization."

In turn, Schroeder evokes the plight of his American-born stepdaughter and says he would not be averse to allowing foreigners living in Germany to hold two passports. But the day is approaching when some doors must be closed, Schroeder insists, because "we can no longer bear the burden of hosting a much greater share of immigrants than other European countries."

With more than 7 million foreigners now living in Germany, immigration has become such a volatile issue that some experts say it should transcend politics. "It's a dangerous game to bring foreigners into an election campaign," said Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen, the federal commissioner for foreigner affairs, who is leaving her post after seven years. "The issue is far too serious to be treated as a superficial tactic to win votes."

GERMANY is the only major Western nation that bases citizenship on bloodlines, dating back to a 1913 imperial decree. With second and third generations of immigrant families still feeling alienated because they have not been able to become German citizens, the risk of a social explosion is growing because many foreigners believe such discriminatory treatment is preventing them from integrating into German society.

Perhaps no other German city has done more to accommodate its immigrant population than Frankfurt, where a history of banking and commerce has made the city and its population more open to the outside world. Besides having the country's only department for multicultural affairs, Frankfurt boasts nine foreigners among its 93 city council members — a result of a European Union decree allowing foreigners to run in local elections.

"There are really two classes of immigrants here," said Rosa Maria Liguori Pace, an Italian teacher and city council member who came to Germany 20 years ago. "Europeans who have been here longer enjoy more rights than those from outside the [EU], such as Turks and Yugoslavs, who feel frustrated because they are excluded from any role in society."

What worries many experts is the persistent difficulty of integrating successive generations of foreigners, especially Germany's 2 million Turks, who feel alienated from the local culture where they were born and raised, yet also have no affinity for their parents' homeland.

"Even if born and raised here, even if you study and speak German, you are always considered a foreigner," said Manuel Parrondo, 38, a computer systems analyst who is president of the city's foreigner advisory board. He was born in Spain and came to Germany when he was 2 years old, yet still has not acquired a passport.

"Germans think foreigners are milking their welfare system but this is a myth," he said. "We are active professionals — nurses, doctors, bankers and lawyers — not jobless people looking for a handout."

Many economists argue that developing a sound immigration policy will be one of the most important tasks of the next government. Within 20 years, there will be two workers for every retiree in Germany. Unless immigrants fill the generational void caused by the low German birth rate, the country's vaunted social market economy with its generous welfare provisions could crumble.

But the rising tide of xenophobic incidents since Germany was reunited in 1990 is not just limited to the eastern part of the country. In Frankfurt's most recent city elections, 12 percent of the voters cast ballots for far right-wing parties that call for the expulsion of foreigners.

"There is a fear that causes some ill-willed people to confuse all foreigners with criminals," said Nikolaus Athanassiadis, a Greek-born lawyer and city council member who has lived here for nearly four decades. "Germans need to learn that foreigners want to contribute to a better way of life here. It would be a sad place if Germany were only for the Germans."

Kosovo Refugees Get Little Sympathy in Sarajevo

Peter Finn in Sarajevo

HOLDING her 2-month-old daughter forward in her pleading arms, Dyzel Minusi cried that her child only had spoiled milk to drink. "If we wanted to die of hunger, we would have stayed in Kosovo," said Minusi, 39, who fled the Serbian province four weeks ago with four of her five children. "We came here to save our children, but they are hungry."

Dozens of men and women pressed around her as she talked, ripples of anger lifting from them in the cramped, fetid space.

"The animals, the cows live better than this," shouted one.

Sarajevo, the city that came to symbolize the plight of refugees, has a new refugee problem. Thousands of ethnic Albanians driven from their homes in Kosovo by Serbian forces have begun to show up in Bosnia, particularly Sarajevo, seeking help.

And despite parallels between the current plight of the Kosovo Albanians and the recent history of the Bosnian Muslims, these latest refugees have found a cold heart in the city that tore at the world's heart.

"They intend to make a ghetto of Sarajevo," said Beriz Belkic, the minister of refugees and social work for the Greater Sarajevo District, in an interview with the local newspaper. "If the arrival of Albanians continues, Sarajevo will not be a city, but a peasant village."

The Office of the High Representative, the West's chief civilian official in Bosnia, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Sarajevo have publicly rebuked Bosnian authorities for their seeming indifference.

"The refusal of the Bosnian and Sarajevo authorities to assist the Kosovars and cooperate with the U.N. is very disturbing," said Ariane Quentier, a spokeswoman for the Sarajevo office of the U.N. body.

But the Bosnian authorities counter that their own refugee problems after the war that devastated the country between 1992 and 1995 are still too severe to be able to cope with even more displaced people.

"Bosnia has more than 800,000 of its own refugees abroad, and within the country . . . there are around 1.5 million displaced persons," said Nudzeim Recica, a deputy minister for refugees and social work at the federal level. "I wish Bosnia was a state like Sweden or Germany, but unfortunately it is not."

And Bosnian officials also said that the arrival of the Kosovo Albanians was jeopardizing the Sarajevo Agreement, signed earlier this year, in which the city agreed to promote the return of thousands of Croats and Serbs who fled during the Bosnian war.

Western officials pointed out that it is hard to jeopardize something that has been more resisted than implemented by Bosnian Muslim and city authorities.

More than a quarter of a million Kosovo Albanians have been driven from their homes by a Serbian army offensive against ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo. Most of the displaced people have hidden in Kosovo or fled into Albania, but last March others began to trickle in here by bus from Pristina, the Kosovo capital.

There are bus routes but effectively no border controls between Pristina and Pale, which is just over the mountains from Sarajevo in the Bosnian Serb Republic, one of the two autonomous entities within Bosnia.

The refugees complained, however, that they were harassed by Serb police both in Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serb Republic as they made their way to Sarajevo.

By July up to 1,000 Kosovo Albanians were arriving each month in Sarajevo, and so far this month as many as 1,500 refugees have arrived, officials said. Bosnian authorities estimate that 10,000 Kosovo Albanians have now entered the country since March.

Serb Hardliner Set to Win

AS vote-counting neared completion and with Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic heading toward defeat by a hard-line nationalist, Western officials last week began to assess the damage, saying the election had dealt a severe blow to U.S.-led efforts to rebuild Bosnia into a multiethnic country, *writes Peter Finn in Sarajevo*.

With the election of ultranationalist Nikola Poplasen as president of the Serb Republic and the likelihood that he will try to form an all-Serb government, the United States and its Western allies have lost not only their most prominent moderate Serb ally here, but also, some fear, a sense of direction in their efforts to end the bitter ethnic divisions created by the 1992-95 war.

"It's clearly a huge surprise, and it makes the goals of the international community much more difficult to implement," one diplomat said. "I don't think there is any option but to try and work with the new government. If that fails, we have a real dilemma."

Two weeks ago, voters chose the president and assembly of the Serb Republic, which was established as an autonomous entity within Bosnia along with the Muslim-Croat Federation under the 1995 peace agreement reached in Dayton, Ohio, that ended the conflict.

Voters also elected representatives to Bosnia's collective presidency — one representative each from the country's Muslim, Croat and Serb communities — as well as the national parliament.

Plavsic was blessed by a campaign visit from Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, handed control of the broadcast electronic media to spout her party line and lavished with the promise of billions of dollars in Western economic aid. She was supposed to be a shoo-in.

Instead, with most of the votes counted, she was headed for certain defeat, Western officials said. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which ran the election and is supervising the count, said final results will not be announced until at least Wednesday.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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In Gaza, Peace Has Brought Only Poverty

Lee Hockstader in Gaza City

IN GAZA'S Jabalya Refugee Camp, a slice of real estate twice as crowded as Manhattan and scarred with rancid fields of garbage, Hussein Radwan counts as one of the lucky ones. He has a job.

Granted, the work isn't much. Radwan spends six days a week bent over a sewing machine in a sweatshop whose single concession to comfort is an overhead fan that stirs the thick summer air. For a 12-hour day stitching together denim skirts, he makes $5.40 — just 45 cents an hour.

But with well over a third of Gazans looking for work, Radwan knows better than to complain. "In this job I can learn new skills," the 17-year-old Palestinian said tactfully. "Things could be worse."

For many Palestinians, they are. And that has come as a bitter shock to people here who were certain that the 1993 Oslo accord with Israel would deliver at least a measure of prosperity along with its promise of peace.

Instead, most Palestinians have gotten poorer since the peace agreement was signed five years ago this month. Incomes, buying power and private investment have plunged while the numbers of families living in poverty have swelled.

That is particularly true in Gaza, a 140-square-mile strip of sand, sun-scorched apartment blocks and squalid refugee camps stretched along the Mediterranean Sea.

It was Gaza's Jabalya Refugee Camp that gave birth to the intifada, the 1987-93 uprising against the Israeli occupation. But the mood today in Jabalya, if anything, is meaner and more sullen than in the adrenalin-charged days of the intifada, when a generation of teenagers came of age in daily battle with the Israelis, residents say.

Now, the Israeli soldiers have withdrawn from most of Gaza, leaving rising poverty, crowding and bitterness in their wake.

"The economic situation in Gaza has deteriorated dramatically in the years of peace, which is a very strange phenomenon," said Khaled Abdel-Shafi, a Palestinian economist who sits on the Gaza City council. "At first there was a lot of talk of Gaza becoming the Singapore of the Middle East. That's why, to a great extent, people supported the peace agreement, which in many ways is a bad deal for the Palestinians. They hoped at least the economic situation would improve."

The fear is that Palestinians will give up on the fraying Middle East peace process as their hopes for prosperity fade. Already, support is inching higher for Sheik Ahmed Yassin, founder and spiritual leader of the militant Islamic group Hamas, according to polls. If peace means impoverishment, some Palestinians say, why should they support it?

The question is all the more apt given the benefits the Oslo accord has brought to Israel. Although the Israeli economy lately has hit a rocky patch, with joblessness creeping toward 10 percent, it boomed in the mid-1990s. Most Israelis are better off now than they were when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat shook hands at the White House five years ago.

The same cannot be said for Palestinians, however, especially in Gaza.

"The Palestinian economy is in crisis . . . measured not just in terms of declining income but also of declining hope," Stuart E. Eizenstat, U.S. undersecretary of state, told an Israeli audience in June. "We are at risk of diminishing the constituency for peace, not only among the public at large but increasingly among Palestinian business people."

To understand one of the reasons why the Palestinian economy has nose-dived, it is helpful to pay a pre-dawn visit to the Erez Crossing, one of the few transit points between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

At 5 a.m., a half-moon still hangs in the purplish sky, but the rush for the exits already has been on for an hour. Swarms of men walk briskly to the Israeli security check. About 50,000 Palestinian workers, half of them from Gaza, cross into Israel proper every day to work in fields, factories, homes and gardens. By Palestinian standards, their wages are good — two or three times more than they could earn for a day's work in Gaza.

Yet the number of Palestinians authorized to work in Israel is down by half from a decade ago. From Gaza, it has fallen by two-thirds.

Beginning with the intifada, Israel slashed the number of Palestinian workers it admitted each day. While the government gradually has eased up in the last two years by handing out more work permits, it has not made up for the lost earnings.

What's more, sporadic Israeli closures of Gaza and the West Bank, in response to Palestinian terror attacks, prompted Jewish-owned businesses to seek a more reliable supply of labor. That led Israel's previous government to admit a huge influx of foreign workers, many of them from Romania and other East European countries.

The result: dwindling demand for Palestinian workers and less cash coming into Gaza's economy, where incomes are already half those of the West Bank — and a tenth those in Israel.

"Savings are gradually being exhausted," said Abdel-Shafi, the city council member. "People are selling their valuables. [Foreign] assistance compensates somewhat for a drop in private savings, but it won't go on forever."

Palestinian and foreign analysts also have blamed Israeli policies for the isolation of Gaza residents from their natural economic partners, the 1.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank. Some 16,000 Palestinian businessmen — from Gaza and the West Bank — have permits to enter Israel every day, but only 800 are allowed to travel freely between Gaza and the West Bank.

The Oslo peace accords offered a blueprint for what amounted to a free-trade zone between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. But what has evolved in practice is very different. Israel does not charge duty on products from Gaza or the West Bank, but its stringent security checks result in delays, higher transport costs and uncompetitive goods.

"I've seen them X-ray ice cream in the summer, taking it out of the truck box by box," said Salem Ajluni, an American economist working for the United Nations in Gaza. "I've seen eggs scanned by metal detectors."

According to Eizenstat, Palestinian entrepreneurs have complained it is cheaper to ship goods from the West Bank to Venice than from the West Bank to Gaza. As a result, Gaza makes do with more expensive goods produced in Israel.

"Now we are living in a very high-security jail," said Awni Hasham, who owns a business that makes and sells office furniture in Gaza City. "We live in a very closed area, paying every penny we have for electricity, water, a place to live. This jail is the responsibility of both sides — the Palestinian Authority and Israel. They put us in this situation."

At no point in recent history — not before Israel captured Gaza in 1967 and began its military occupation, nor after, including since Israel withdrew its troops from Gaza four years ago and the Palestinian Authority took over — has Gaza had an economic development plan. Lacking natural resources, Gaza languished as a supplier of cheap labor to Israel.

That was supposed to change after Israel and the Palestinians set a course toward peace in 1993. Marriott made plans to build a 200-room hotel, an investment of $80 million that would showcase Gaza's spectacular beach. Calvin Klein expressed interest in building a factory.

But private investors became scarce as the peace process began to fray. Marriott froze its hotel plan. Calvin Klein seemed to disappear.

"For years we were asleep and dreaming of the future and our freedom," said Hasham. "And suddenly we woke up to see the future as it is. And it's not so good."

Palestinian police in Gaza City beat back demonstrators of the Islamic Hamas group. Support for the militant group is increasing as hopes for prosperity fade PHOTOGRAPH: ADEL HANA

Health Declines for Immigrant Children

William Branigin

DESPITE generally higher poverty rates, children in immigrant families tend to be healthier than those of U.S.-born parents, but the immigrant children's health deteriorates the longer they remain in the United States and assimilate into American life, according to a new national study released this month.

The 271-page report by an expert panel of researchers analyzed parental surveys and a wide variety of other health and social statistics to reach its conclusions.

While the reasons for the deteriorating health of immigrant children is not fully clear, members of the study panel and outside sociologists attributed the decline to a negative form of assimilation in which — over time — the children of immigrants often abandon the relatively healthy diets, discipline and protective family structures that their families arrived with and adapt the lifestyle of a poor American "underclass."

"The McDonaldization of the world is not necessarily progress when it comes to nutritious diets," said Ruben Rumbaut, a sociologist whose work was cited in the study by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine.

Children who are immigrants themselves or have immigrant parents total 14 million across the country, accounting for one of every five people under 18 and making up the fastest-growing segment of the youth population. Since 1990, their numbers have grown seven times faster than children of U.S.-born parents.

Their health status is becoming an increasingly vital concern, not only to medical professionals but to a nation whose baby-boom generation will be relying on this young population to support them.

The report indicated a broad array of factors might explain the health status of immigrant children. Recent immigrants tend to eat more unprocessed foods, such as fruits, grains and vegetables, and they tend to have strong, two-parent families and maintain social taboos that discourage smoking and drinking by women, researchers said.

They also might be healthier to begin with because they come from a hardy, "self-selected group" willing to try making a new life in a foreign land.

The panel found children in immigrant families experience fewer short- and long-term health problems and fewer accidents and injuries than do children of U.S.-born parents. It also found fewer low-birthweight babies and infant deaths in immigrant families, and adolescents reportedly have fewer mental health problems and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as abuse of drugs or alcohol, early sexual activity and delinquency or violence.

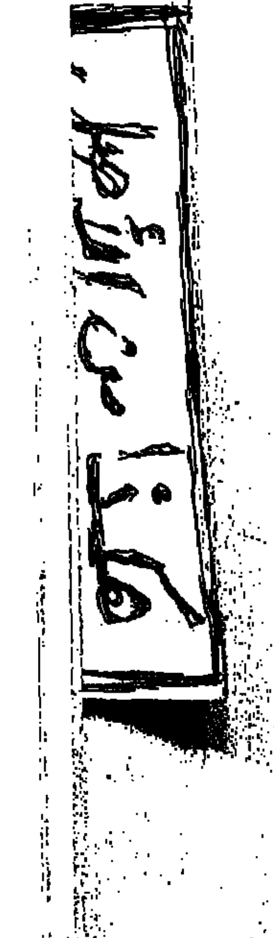
"These findings are unexpected because these families are more likely to live in poverty," according to the report. In addition, the immigrant families are less likely to have health insurance or receive regular medical care, and some face increased risks of specific illnesses such as drug-resistant tuberculosis, the study found.

Whatever initial advantage they have, however, tends to deteriorate the longer immigrant families are in the United States and from one generation to the next.

In one of the most surprising findings, the report cited a number of studies that show significantly lower rates of infant mortality and low-birthweight babies among immigrant mothers than among U.S.-born mothers of the same ethnic and social class. The lower rates held true for different ethnic groups despite the greater access of U.S.-born mothers to prenatal care, the report said.

While stopping short of definitive explanations for what it called an "epidemiological paradox," the report suggested immigrant mothers are less likely to smoke or use alcohol or drugs and might have healthier diets and stronger family bonds than women who have been in the country longer.

"Of particular concern, the study said, are children from 12 countries that account for half the children in immigrant families in the United States: Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Haiti, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and the former Soviet Union. The negative effects of assimilation seem to be particularly strong among those groups, researchers found.



Wrong Side of the Tracks

Frances Stead Sellers

THE FALL OF A SPARROW
By Robert Hellenga
Scribner. 460pp. $25

ON AUGUST 12, 1980, a terrorist bomb exploded in a busy northern Italian railroad station, leaving 85 people dead and more than 200 wounded.

Robert Hellenga has chosen this harrowing real-life event as the foundation for his remarkable second novel. The Fall Of A Sparrow chronicles the "concentric rings of stories" that spread like ripples on a pond from such a singular event through the family of a fictional American student. Cookie Woodhull, the bombing's 86th victim, didn't die immediately. She survived the blast for several excruciating days, lying armless and charred beyond recognition in an intensive care unit. Hellenga picks up her family's story six years after the explosion.

The girl's father and the novel's protagonist is Alan "Woody" Woodhull, a learned, well-intentioned and weak-willed classicist who teaches at St. Clair College, a small liberal arts school in Illinois. Hellenga mixes the comic and the catastrophic, the ridiculous and the sublime to capture difficult truths about the nature of human resilience — and what it means to move on.

Six years on, the tragedy's fallout is palpable. Woody's wife seeks refuge first in madness and then in religion, finally accepting that the slaughter was an act of God, as simply inexplicable as a deadly tidal wave or a bolt of lightening.

But Woody sees it all quite differently. He has known all along that the blast was calculated, that the bomb was carried to the station and carefully placed where it would do the most damage — beneath a seat in the second-class waiting room on a busy August holiday. He also knows that the woman who stashed it there was about Cookie's age. The young terrorist's arrest in Argentina and her imminent extradition to Italy for trial precipitates the novel's action — and Woody's determination to begin a *vita nuova*, a new life.

New beginnings are hard, though. Hannah and Woody have separated after almost 30 years of marriage. Their two younger daughters have now left home, leaving Woody struggling to continue teaching and most of all to find meaning — and love — in life again.

It's an uphill battle. Good Gutenberg man that he is, Woody does it all by the book, looking for guidance in the classics, just as he consults literary oracles for advice on cooking, gardening and sex. He uses the great philosophical dilemmas of The Odyssey to provoke debate about the nature of human existence in his classes, just as he turns (briefly) to his leading moral lights before sleeping with one particularly promising student.

This takes Hellenga into territory more familiar from David Lodge's rambunctious satire — the realm of sexual harassment and college fundraising. And what, wonders Woody in turn, would Plato, Aristotle or C.S. Lewis make of it all?

The old standbys don't provide Woody with the answers he needs. But, face-to-face with the person who murdered his child, Woody begins to look not to great thinkers but within himself for a means of coming to terms with her actions.

Once in a while, when reality is too painful to bear, fiction can help us to explore the fragility of our human condition. This is such a book. With compassion and humor, it conveys a sense of certainty and ultimate faith that only the finest writing can achieve.

See Venice and Die

Adam Kirsch

MISTLER'S EXIT
By Louis Begley
Knopf. 206pp. $22

MISTLER'S Exit, Louis Begley's fifth novel, is a gilded miniature. This is true of its subject matter: It is a novel of New York's wealthy professional elite, the latter-day counterpart to Edith Wharton's aristocrats. But it is equally true of Begley's style, which favors expert craftsmanship over ragged energies, and of his view of life, which could best be described as Epicurean: pleasure-loving, mature to the point of world-weariness, and decidedly unmetaphysical.

These are also the attributes of Thomas Mistler, whose "exit" from the world with an almost apathetic grace forms Begley's subject. Mistler is an Ivy League-educated advertising tycoon somewhere in his sixties, who early on abandoned his literary ambitions for the more concrete attainments of the professional world. Men who candidly admit, like Mistler, that "what I really do is use power" are not often lovable, and indeed, we get the feeling that Mistler himself would not want such sympathy, especially from strangers.

His cold confidence is not even shaken when, on the first page of the novel, he learns that he is dying of liver cancer. The news prompts only a trip to Venice, whose beauties he intends to sample one last time. When he arrives, he is surprised to find Lina, a young photographer he met at a dinner party, waiting in his room; the inevitable affair follows. But we know that Mistler is a man of the world, with many infidelities under his belt, and the affair with Lina is explicitly not a final clutch at youth. Indeed, it is a lackluster and almost unwanted romance, as Mistler himself reflects: "The paradox was amusing: that he, who had so little time, should have less and less inclination to seize the day." Instead, in keeping with his temperament, he practices the cooler pleasures of connoisseurship: drinking good wines, visiting his favorite Titians, winding down canals to the best restaurants.

Only towards the end does Mistler begin to lose his composure. And a chance meeting with his first love, a woman who inspired purer, more poetic feelings, forces him to confront a potential different life. But as Mistler cautions us, these reflections are "not purely a case of terminal sentimentality."

Begley is determined not to allow us the easy pleasures of feeling pity for, or moral superiority to, Mistler; rather, he forces us to accept Mistler on his own terms, his faults a necessary part of his achievement. Most likely Mistler — and Begley — would not have it any other way.



Letting rip . . . Giddins's compendium swings from Dizzy Gillespie to Doris Day PHOTO: ALLAN TITMUSS

Taking It From the Top

Jonathan Yardley

VISIONS OF JAZZ
The First Century
By Gary Giddins
Oxford. 704pp. $39.95

THIS massive volume is a history of sorts of the first century of jazz. Of sorts, that is, because unlike Ted Gioia's The History Of Jazz, published (also by Oxford) a year ago, it does not strive to be encyclopedic, makes only perfunctory gestures toward strict chronology, and pays lingering, loving attention to certain musicians (Ethel Waters, Spike Jones, even Doris Day) not often granted space, much less admiration, in jazz criticism. Unlike The History Of Jazz, Visions Of Jazz is not a reference book; rather, it is (to date, at least) the definitive compendium by the most interesting jazz critic now at work.

As Giddins himself probably would be the first to acknowledge, this characterization seems far less complimentary than it is meant to be. There has been plenty of writing about jazz over the years, but precious little of it has been much good. Too often it is biased and contentious, or long on enthusiasm and short on knowledge, or caught up in the racial animosities and feuds that have afflicted jazz, or — this, alas, more than anything else — simply unreadable. But Giddins knows his subject, his prose is interesting and graceful and his judgments are measured and fair.

Giddins does most of his writing for the Village Voice. Apparently he is comfortable with that publication's reflexively leftish politics, as expressions of it pop up from time to time (viz., his account of Duke Ellington's visit to the Nixon White House), but readers of different persuasions — or those who feel, as I do, that politics has no place in jazz or any other music — can sail unharmed through these blips. Where it really counts, Giddins sees jazz without blinders, whether political or racial or (a constant pitfall in jazz) stylistic.

For me, as doubtless for numerous other lovers of jazz, Giddins has become the critic against whose opinions I measure my own. Not only are his judgments lucid, but I often agree with them. Though he is more hospitable than I to the avant garde, our worlds of jazz have the same foundations: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Fats Waller, Chick Webb, Jimmie Lunceford, Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie, Gerry Mulligan, Billie Holiday, Stan Getz, the Modern Jazz Quartet. I find myself constantly hoping to be reaffirmed in my convictions when reading about his — which happens often enough to keep me ever curious about what he will say next.

This, it seems to me, is what the relationship between critic and reader should be. Agreeing with a critic one reads regularly is far less important than knowing the critic's bed-rock convictions, quirks, strong points and weak ones. In my own, rather long lifetime of reading critics, this has happened only rarely so the compliment is exceedingly high.

Giddins sees jazz without blinders, whether political or racial or stylistic

Although reviewing obligations required me to read Visions Of Jazz straight through, it is really a book for dipping into. If you are listening, say, to Miles Davis's "Miles Ahead" and if it is your good fortune to have a copy of Visions Of Jazz at hand, you will want to have a look at its fine discussion of Davis. Not merely will you find an emphatic and persuasive analysis of that incomparably brilliant album. But even if, like me, you don't share Giddins's enthusiasm for Davis's later music, especially his attempts at "fusion" with rock, you will be sympathetic to his discussion of Davis's ever-restless musical curiosity and his passion for experimentation.

Giddins is always smart, always interesting and occasionally downright surprising, to wit: "Bop, as initially presented, was surely the most demanding virtuoso music ever to take root in the American vernacular, much as rock and roll, as initially presented, was very likely the most elemental. Both were soon compromised, for predictably opposite reasons. What was naive, direct and simple in rock and roll gave way to worldly ambition: increased technique, expanded instrumentation, modern chords, self-conscious lyrics. What was rigorous, absolute and unyielding in bop was toned down by impatience and exhaustion: fewer chords, steadier tempos, a firmer backbeat, blues that felt like blues."

Reading along in a highly conversational collection of brief pieces about individual musicians and suddenly coming across a passage such as that is an eye-opening experience. Without laying out any grand theories, without pretense or pomposity, Giddins smoothly shifts gears and in so doing awakens one to the unexpected. He does the same in his lovely portraits of Gerry Mulligan (for him, obviously, as for me, a favorite), Thelonious Monk, Art Tatum and the Modern Jazz Quartet, in all of which he reaches beyond his immediate subject matter to consider broader questions about jazz and those who play it.

Nothing that Giddins writes is "just" a profile of a musician or a discussion of a recording or live performance; he always has something else to say, as in his asides about the importance of the three-minute recording limit to the shape of early jazz (not an original point but made here with particular acuity), the erratic role played by the recording companies themselves, and the essential relationship between black originality and white imitation.

Unlike too many others inside the little world of jazz, Giddins has an expansive, welcoming view of it, one broad enough to embrace Rosemary Clooney as well as Ella Fitzgerald, Irving Berlin as well as Duke Ellington. He understands that jazz is American to the core and that the very essence of America is heterogeneity. It may not have been intended as such, but Visions Of Jazz is a celebration and reaffirmation of precisely that.

Education for Business

In conjunction with Edition XII



'Video conferencing calls for a different approach on the part of the tutor to ensure everyone has a good opportunity to join in discussion'
PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR MELTON

Learning to go the distance

New technology means distance learners no longer feel they are on their own, says **Michael Pitfield**

LONG gone are the days when distance learning meant isolated individuals struggling to complete their studies while dependent on the vagaries the postal system for feedback from their tutors. Developments in electronic communication, the growth of CD-Roms and the increasing importance attached to face-to-face contact for course participants means that the concept of distance learning has been transformed in recent years.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of distance learning MBAs. Once thought of as the poor relation of MBA provision, they are now fully recognised as being mainstream. This is evidenced by the fact that the Association of MBAs (Amba) has, for some years, accredited the leading distance learning programmes.

Only eight distance learning MBAs of the 20 offered by schools in Britain meet Amba's demanding criteria: Aston, Durham University, Henley Management College, the Open University Business School, Warwick University, Strathclyde University, Kingston University and Leicester University.

Some of these schools, such as Henley and OUBS, have many thousands of students participating in their programmes all around the world. In Henley's case it has more than 7,000 MBA students studying in more than 90 countries.

The Amba Guide — a vital source of information on all MBAs — suggests that "gaining an MBA by distance learning usually takes approximately three years, but it is particularly suitable for internationally mobile executives who are unable to commit to fixed periods of study.

One of the main advantages of distance learning is the immediate integration of your learning into the workplace, and this applicability to work can make distance learning an attractive proposition to sponsoring organisations."

Such is the success of this approach that some big employers such as IBM now prefer to support their executives on distance learning programmes rather than on traditional full-time MBAs.

The speed of developments in information technology has contributed greatly to the rate of growth in distance learning MBAs, and Henley has been at the forefront of these initiatives. The college pioneered the use of Lotus Notes as a student support mechanism in the early 1990s.

Lotus Notes allows students to exchange views, access databases, take part in discussions, and communicate with administrators and faculty regardless of time-zone and geographical location. It is also possible to submit assignments by way of Lotus Notes and to receive feedback from tutors, thereby reducing turnaround time and eliciting legible feedback.

Henley is now working with IBM to develop these processes further, particularly through the use of Lotus Learning Space, a newly developed software "platform" for educational purposes.

Advances in distance learning are not restricted to computer-based technology. The greater availability of video conferencing facilities and the dramatic reduction in their costs has meant that this medium, too, can be used effectively for educational purposes. Cable & Wireless runs an in-company MBA Telecommunications programme with Henley which makes heavy use of video conferencing to link together programme participants and tutors all over the world.

Professor Ray Wild, principal of Henley, who has run conferences for this programme, explains that "video conferencing involves a quite different learning process for the students and calls for a significantly different approach on the part of the tutor to ensure that all participants have a good opportunity to join in discussion, understand what is going on and learn from the process".

Clearly, new leading channels are going to challenge business school faculty to adapt their teaching processes away from traditional presentation towards mentoring support, guidance and discussion.

One of the key factors differentiating this newest generation of distance learning programmes from their more primitive predecessors is the fact that most of the leading schools offering these programmes include a significant amount of face-to-face contact and personal support for students.

Those aspects of the curriculum that can best be studied by individuals learning at their own pace are especially suited to distance learning processes. Other aspects such as skills development, discussion of concepts, etc, benefit from face-to-face communication. Most of the really good distance learning MBA programmes therefore include significant opportunities for students to participate in workshops, seminars, tutorials and residential weekends to complement their individually paced studies and to enhance their skills base.

This flexibility is extremely attractive to the high-flying, busy, mobile, international executive. Such managers, typically in their late-20s to middle-30s and sponsored by their organisations, are highly computer-literate — these are the people you see with laptop PCs on planes and trains.

Their travel commitments and demanding jobs mean that they have to fit their qualification studies around their work schedule and cannot afford the luxury of regular commitment or extended time away from the office.

A distance learning MBA offers the perfect solution. In the case of the Henley MBA, such executives can register for and undertake a starter workshop in one country, conduct their studies as they travel around, maintaining electronic contact with fellow students and the faculty, and can then receive support, guidance and participation in further workshops.

Distance learning is certainly not an easy option. While it can be undertaken by students at their own pace, this method of study requires enormous application as well as support from the various "stakeholders" surrounding the individual, the most important of whom are the manager's employer and his or her family.

● During September, Henley Management College is organising a technology feature, accessible through its website http://www.henley.ac.uk which enables visitors to test electronic support mechanisms for Henley's distance learning MBA programme.

Michael Pitfield is director of corporate affairs at Henley Management College

Make sure you weigh up the pros and cons

✔ Flexibility means that individual students can structure their learning experiences to meet their personal needs and circumstances.
✔ Transportability is vitally important for executives on the move. Those whose jobs move from country to country over relatively short periods of time can take their MBA programme with them.
✔ Distance learning MBA programmes increasingly can provide opportunities for networking between students in the course of workshops and seminars, and through the Internet, Lotus Notes and video conferencing.
✔ Because executives are studying while they are working, they can immediately integrate their studies with their work activities. Indeed, many of the assignments and projects undertaken as part of distance learning MBA programmes require application to work.
✔ Unlike attendance at traditional full-time MBA programmes, participation in a distance learning course means that employment is not interrupted by extended study leave.
✔ Given the challenges of completing such a self-paced learning experience, successful attainment of a distance learning MBA is evidence of the individual's high degree of motivation and commitment.
✘ A distance learning MBA programme can take longer than other methods of study. On average, a distance learning MBA will be completed in between three and four years, whereas full-time and part-time programmes can often be completed in one or two.
✘ Given the greater requirement for personal motivation and time management, and possible changes in the individual's circumstances over three years, there is often a higher drop-out rate on distance learning programmes than on other courses.
✘ Despite the increasing provision of workshops, tutorials and seminars, there is a smaller degree of face-to-face contact in a distance learning MBA programme.
✘ An individual's geographic location may affect the level of support available. For example, there is limited provision of distance learning programmes in the United States and Australia, and computer facilities and telecommunications links can be unreliable or non-existent in parts of Africa.
✘ Given the success of some of the top distance learning MBA programmes, others have now sprung up. One disadvantage of this is that there can be inconsistency in the quality of course materials between various programmes, and potential students are advised to investigate the nature of such programmes, the quality of their materials and the degree of accreditation awarded by institutions such as Amba.

Michael Pitfield



Mistresses of the Master's programme

The number of women doing MBAs is on the increase but there is still some way to go before they take their full quota of places, writes **Susan Miller**

OBTAINING an MBA qualification is a challenging task. Among other things, you need determination, energy, commitment and stamina. You need to be aware that there will be many nights when the midnight oil burns brightly, and you will have to be ready to make personal sacrifices, as hobbies, sports interests and weekend activities are foregone in the interests of finishing the next assignment.

If you opt to study part-time while continuing to hold down a job, as many students do, you will have to balance (juggle is perhaps the more apt word) the demands of the course, home and family life, and a career.

All this applies equally to both male and female students. But women are still under-represented on many MBA programmes. Each year, of the 10,000 individuals who successfully complete an MBA in the UK, only about a quarter are women. Although this proportion has been steadily rising there is still some way to go before women take their full quota of places on MBA courses.

Why is this? No one doubts that women are capable of the intellectual challenge of the degree, nor would anyone argue that they lack the drive and determination to succeed.

Some of the reasons may well be to do with finance — after all, an MBA does not come cheap and though the financial rewards may come later as earning power increases, women's pay still lags behind men's in many sectors. This makes it harder to save to pay fees, and/or to take the time out to study (one year for most UK full-time courses, two years for part-time programmes).

And again, although things are definitely improving, women may not be in the kinds of positions that make sponsorship from employers — the easiest route financially for the lucky ones — readily forthcoming.

Apart from funding the course, any doubts about whether or not to undertake an MBA may be to do with being unsure of exactly what the qualification can offer. While dreams of an MBA being the passport to instant and meteoric career elevation should be quickly dispelled, the degree does offer the chance to learn new skills and get up-to-date with the latest management thinking.

Perhaps more importantly, it provides an opportunity to reflect on past experience (one's own and that of others on the course) to generate insight and understanding.

As a result it is very important that the institution offering the course attracts high-calibre participants who possess wide experience at the appropriate senior level. A good MBA course should therefore equip you with the capacity for true life-long learning that goes beyond the specific management tools and techniques currently available.

This is of direct relevance to both men and women, but as one recent female graduate pointed out: "Women's careers are often untidy, characterised by a lack of sequence, jumping around in response to marriage, children and family relocation. An MBA qualification allows women to fast-track across this pattern, giving a structured experience on which to build a future career."

The MBA can therefore help the individual in organising and making sense of past experience — and the experience of managing the complex and shifting demands of home and family life must count as relevant here — while preparing for future challenges, in both career and personal spheres.

Perhaps the most obvious apparent constraint on women taking the plunge is the perception that women's significant domestic responsibilities may constrain the time available to study. With traditional gender divisions breaking down in some areas this may be more myth than reality. Men, too, have homecare responsibilities, be it to children or elderly relatives, and all participants need to take account of the potential strain on home and family life.

But a balance can be achieved. Indeed, doing an MBA need not prohibit the extension of the family. One student, a chartered accountant currently studying part-time for the Durham MBA, has a challenging full-time position with KPMG — who have sponsored her studies — as well as having three sons under six years of age. During her first year of study she give birth to a daughter while continuing to achieve very high grades in her assignments.

She explained her situation: "I have had to be extremely organised in my approach to my studies . . . early completion of assignments rather than a last-minute rush has proved to be essential. I have a very supportive employer, husband, parents and parents-in-law, without whom I would not have been able to undertake the course.

"One of the difficulties is that I still adopt the traditional female role in the home with regard to looking after the children, managing the household and taking responsibility for all domestic matters — the assistance of my parents and parents-in-law has allowed me to balance these tasks."



'Women's careers are often untidy, jumping around in response to marriage, children and family relocation' PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL MUNNS

What really matters is that prospective students obtain a realistic picture of what commitments studying for an MBA will involve. At Durham, part-timers should anticipate on average about 12-16 hours a week of study time, in addition to class sessions.

Recognising that supportive relationships are crucial to the successful completion of an MBA programme, Durham encourages participants to bring along partners to its Open Days, so that they can hear for themselves what the MBA is about and ask questions.

Good planning and time management are essential skills that all MBA students — along with managers — must have, or quickly develop. It does help if you are organised. The institution also needs to help by giving as much notice as possible of all teaching and assessment dates.

At Durham the part-time course is taught on Friday and Saturday. This makes it more likely that childcare can be shared with partners, for example. For those trying to persuade employers to sponsor them it means that they only lose one working day in the week, and that the employer has the immediate benefit of new learning.

But flexibility is also necessary, and the fact that for the first year of Durham's part-time course participants are divided into two parallel groups means that class-hopping is possible if emergencies arise.

THERE was a time when the stereotype of the MBA graduate was that of a thrusting, arrogant and aggressive individual — usually male. How close this portrayal is to the truth should not concern us here; none the less it is fair to say that some programmes are more competitive than others. While there is still competition to gain acceptance to a good MBA course, how much inter-student competition there may be once the programme has begun needs to be considered.

One female student admitted to worries before joining her course: "Is it going to be packed out with 30-something lads who were on the fast track?" However, she was reassured once she had begun her classes, commenting afterwards that "the apprehension for many women when contemplating an MBA is that it will be fiercely competitive". While this is true up to a point — and rightly so if the degree is to retain credibility — business schools in the UK have learned to embrace a variety of learning styles and topics.

An example of this is the outdoor development weekend, a component which is included early on in the course at Durham. Its purpose is to help students learn more about each other, and themselves, through a weekend of outdoor activities in the Lake District.

The purpose of the outdoor development weekend run by Durham University is to help students learn more about each other, and about themselves

It is intended to be challenging but fun. Very often such courses are perceived to be tests of physical endurance, requiring strenuous physical capabilities. Durham has worked particularly hard to ensure this is not the case. The nature of the weekend is such that everyone can fully contribute, whatever their gender or age.

The lesson, for both women and men, is to look carefully at provider institutions. Not all MBAs are of the same quality, so they need to ensure that the programme is accredited by Amba (the Association of MBAs), which benchmarks MBAs in the UK and Europe. More than this, they need to make sure the ethos of the programme is compatible with their requirements.

Prospective students also need to look carefully at the amount and type of support they are given once on the programme. What academic and administrative support is offered? Do students get a personal tutor? How far are student support groups encouraged? What is the help available to manage the exit from the programme in terms of career guidance, job applications, networking?

Particularly important are the arrangements for helping overseas students settle down, find accommodation and generally cope with culture change. Here a university-wide international office can be invaluable in helping students cope with the adjustments necessary to undertaking learning in a different environment. This may be particularly important for some women coming from cultures where female independence is not taken for granted.

All the above factors are critical in helping participants to get real value and enjoyment from the experience. The only way to find out more is to talk to someone involved with the programme that you are thinking of attending. Most institutions are only too happy to discuss these issues with interested callers.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to would-be MBAs is the confidence to go ahead and apply. Again both sexes may suffer from self-doubt, wondering if they will be able to cope with the rigours of the course. However, sometimes women's experience in the workplace may serve to increase their worries.

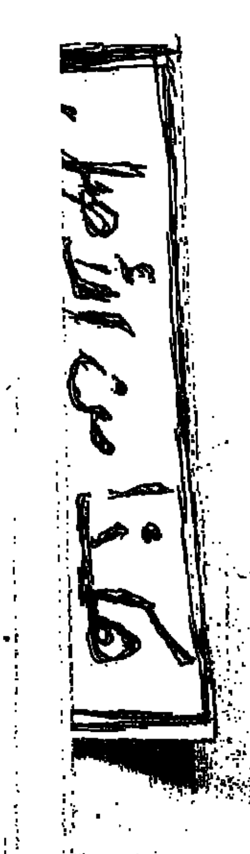
A female graduate remarked: "In the 1980s as managing director in a male dominated business sector I was never (or rarely) treated with the same respect as my male counterparts.

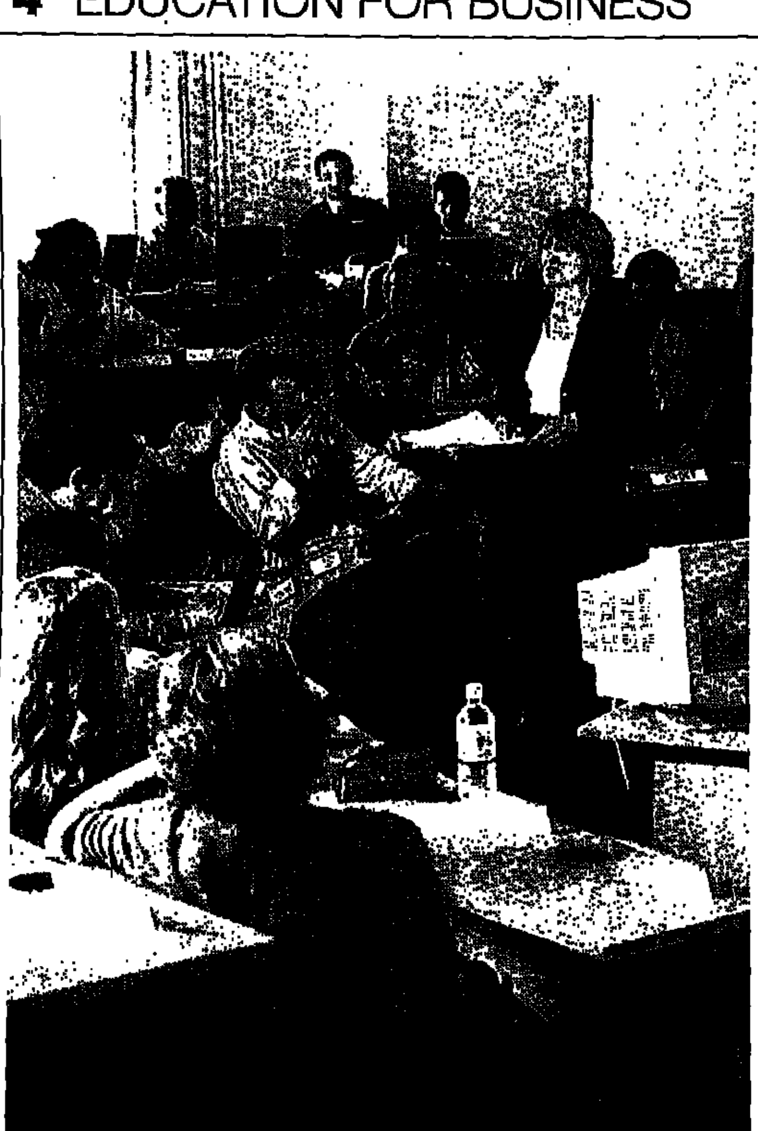
"As the 1990s have progressed, very little has changed because I did not have a relevant qualification to match my experience, therefore I felt I lacked credibility . . . [This is] no longer so."

"If [you are] prepared to work hard you will get the rewards, therefore I would encourage women to undertake an MBA — after all, if I can do it, then so can they."

An MBA is challenging, but it should be enjoyable. It will certainly help your personal development and it should enhance your career prospects. Good management is about a blend of skills and insights. Women have these capabilities — if they want the qualification, they need to think about applying for the course.

Dr Susan Miller is director of the part-time MBA at Durham University Business School





Interaction with fellow students can be invaluable in terms of networking and swapping ideas PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN HARRISON

Nothing but the best

A business school should not just offer the right disciplines, it should also make learning fun, writes **Richard Whittington**

ABOUT 9,000 young managers begin MBA degrees every year in Britain, while in the United States the number is 100,000. By the time today's young executives reach top management positions, they will be competing with a worldwide population of MBA graduates numbering several million.

The right business school will provide the student with the right skills, the right networks and the right access to blue-chip careers, allowing him or her to get ahead in this competitive world. But the right business school should also give its students something more — the MBA should be an opportunity for new challenges, great friendships and careful reflection on what it means to be a professional manager.

There are about 110 MBA programmes in Britain. In the US there are 255 "accredited" MBA programmes as well as a large number of other courses. In addition there is a choice of excellent English-speaking or bilingual business schools in France, Holland, Spain, Italy and Switzerland, and the same is true of Hong Kong, Singapore and India.

With such a wide range of choice on offer to the prospective student, some pointers as to how to find the best course for each individual's needs, I'm sure, would be most welcome.

Let's start with the educational packages that are currently available. Traditionally, MBAs are structured in terms of full-time, one- or two-year courses, but now a range of part-time options — evenings or weekend, distance-learning, modular, executive, consortium or multi-modular — are available.

The part-time variants all have the virtue of "earn-as-you-learn" — there is no sudden drop in income, you keep your job and you can apply what you learn in the workplace immediately. In addition Consortium MBAs are often taken in-company, as part of planned career development packages for high-flyers.

There is a choice of excellent bilingual business schools based in Europe and Asia

Employers often sponsor managers on other part-time variants, viewing MBA courses as a way to train and retain their best staff. Managers anticipating job moves over the course of their studies will want to have a multi-mode option, perhaps beginning on a local evening MBA but then proceeding on to a distance-learning variant as their job takes them to other parts of the country or overseas.

The part-time MBA option is often best for managers who see their future in terms of steady and satisfactory career progression with their current employer and whose family or similar responsibilities discourage the gamble of full-time study.

But the part-time option can be seen as a second-best. Consortium MBAs are sometimes accused of being too focused on the particular needs of sponsoring companies to offer a genuinely transferable qualification. Distance-learning options inevitably lose the intense interaction with fellow students. Many of the best business schools offer limited part-time options or none at all.

Part-time isn't easy either. The better programmes usually take around three years. The stress of studying evenings and weekends for the first time for 10 years or more often coincides with the birth of children and promotion to major new responsibilities. On some distance-learning programmes the drop-out rate in the first year can exceed 50 per cent.

The full-time MBA programme typically involves two years of study in the US, although it is usually only one year in most of the rest of the world.

For the ambitious and upwardly

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Continued from page 4

mobile individual, full-time is usually the best option to take. It can give you the opportunity to "internationalise", by studying abroad; it is an effective route to new career specialisms or sectors; and it allows you to get the best from the MBA experience, by concentrating on your studies and building new relationships. However, it is important to remember that the full-time option is expensive in terms of lost earnings opportunities.

Although some employers may release their managers for the duration of the course, and a few even sponsor individuals, most full-time students have to resign their current employment and seek new jobs when their studies come to an end. Therefore the stakes are high with the full-time option, so you will need to choose your business school very carefully.

There are a number of factors which determine whether a particular establishment is suitable for you. Price of course comes into the equation, with fees in the United Kingdom for a one-year course ranging from about $12,000 to more than $30,000.

But the fees are only part of the total cost of the year, and it is overall value for money that matters in the end. Excellent reputation, good faculty, state-of-the art facilities, the interest of top recruiters, innovative courses and strong students can all make a high initial investment pay many times over in the course of an individual's career.

The average quality of students can be screened quite easily using quantitative criteria. Average GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) scores of students is a key criterion. Better schools will usually have average GMATs above 600 — the Said Business School at Oxford has the highest average score in the UK at 655.

Another important criterion might well be the international mix of students. In the UK, European schools tend to score over their North American rivals, but very high proportions of overseas students can sometimes indicate that an establishment does not have a high reputation within its own region.

The average age and work experience of students on the course can be important criteria too.

Check the staffing of the careers service and the number of on-campus recruiters

The course design is much more difficult to assess with any great accuracy. Most MBA courses look very much the same in their basic focus on strategy, finance, marketing and so on. However, accreditation by reputed bodies is an important clue.

In the UK the Association of MBAs (Amba) only accredits about a third of the business schools in the country (the Said Business School, as a new school, is currently awaiting accreditation).

The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in the US is similarly selective. Look out for innovative real-world project opportunities or international exchanges.

A wide range of electives can also be a good sign, but you will need to check carefully as to how many actually run.

You will want a lively faculty, actively involved in business and research. You can often see what you have to learn from faculty by checking their personal web-pages, usually accessible via the home-page of their business school or university. Involvement in research can tell you how up-to-date the teaching is likely to be. In Britain, for example, ratings from the Government's Research Assessment Exercise are helpful — a rating of four or above indicates a strong research environment.

The location of a school is a key criterion. Choosing to study overseas is a useful step in internationalising your experience, but you may not receive all the careers support you might like if you are returning to another country. Location in a major urban centre puts you at the heart of business, but it can often add to the stress and expense of a challenging year.

Some business schools are stand-alone; that is, they provide a dedicated and intense MBA environment. Other institutions are based in universities, allowing them to draw on a much wider expertise and offering a larger community to interact with.

The Said Business School brings in lecturers from the top-rated economics and law faculties of Oxford university, while its students participate fully in the traditional Oxford college life. In the end each kind of business school will offer its own unique experience and suit different kinds of people.

Post-MBA careers is the bottom-line for most students. Statistics about average salary enhancement or numbers of job offers are widely publicised, but remember that these are averages and not promises to you specifically.

You should check out the staffing of the careers service and the number of on-campus recruiters. Remember that the best consultancies and banks tend to select from a very narrow pool of MBA programmes, so check whether your desired future employers are recruiting from the programme you have in mind.

And the value of the MBA doesn't stop with the first job. The best MBA programmes have active alumni organisations, which can be a valuable resource through the rest of your career.

Getting into the right business school will not be easy. You should expect a careful selection process, including at least one interview with faculty. But remember too that the business schools need talent, so you should not be afraid to ask hard questions.

Visiting the school and meeting students and faculty are important parts of the process. You are a valuable customer.

Richard Whittington is deputy director (MBA) of the Said Business School, University Reader in Strategy and a Fellow of New College, Oxford

Information resources

- The Amba Guide and Which MBA?, compiled annually by George Bickerstaffe and published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, provide objective information about programmes. As well as its own international ranking, Which MBA? provides a wealth of comparative statistics and some wise advice.
- Business Week and US News & World Report both publish influential rankings of schools, but each is oriented largely towards North American schools
- Two web-based sources are the Official MBA Guide: http://mba.us.com/guide/; and the Business Week Best B-Schools service: http:www.businessweek.com/tocs/bschools
Both these offer a lot of commentary as well as effective search engines for identifying business schools according to a wide-range of criteria
- The web site of the European Foundation of Management Development — http://www.efmd.be — also gives information on schools and programmes, including hypertext links to the schools' home sites.

Michael Pitfield



Two students short-listed for an MBA scholarship reflect on ethical responsibilities and commercial realities

Through a moral maze

David Bagley

FOR ONE leading sportswear company the World Cup began with an allegation that their footballs had been manufactured by political prisoners in Chinese jails. The public reaction to this claim made it clear that such practices are ethically unacceptable; and, regardless of whether the claim has any substance, in this case there appears to be no ethical dilemma — capitalising on the misfortune of political prisoners is immoral.

Ethical decisions in business are rarely so clear-cut, and they are largely dependent on the circumstances and the constraints within which the decisions are made. Business involves capitalising on a competitive advantage. Ethically, the question is frequently: to what degree and in what circumstances?

The United States government's current position is that strategies adopted by the big computer companies are unacceptable because they are over-capitalising on an advantage they have in the marketplace. In a similar vein, opportunistic pricing — such as charging for water in a nightclub — could be considered to be unethical. The paradox in such circumstances is that, although it is accepted that prices are driven by supply and demand, over-capitalising on demand is considered to be ethically unacceptable. The dilemma is, therefore, to what degree opportunities can be capitalised on before that capitalisation becomes ethically unacceptable.

A contemporary issue illustrating how circumstances affect ethical decisions is the use of child labour. Although, under most circumstances, employing children in factories in Britain would be unacceptable, employing child labour may not be ethically unacceptable in itself.

In many cases, banning companies in the developing world from employing child labour would severely impair the lives of the children and families who rely on this work as a source of income. The apparently principled stance that child labour is unacceptable ignores the realities in which many of the children are employed. Clearly differing circumstances affect the morality of business operations.

Differing circumstances also impose differing constraints on the application of ethics in business. Consider a funds manager who is able to differentiate between investment opportunities on ethical grounds — for example, stocks in an intermediate technology firm might be preferred to stocks in an arms supplier. Although one stock is ethically preferred, the manager's responsibilities to his or her investors to maximise the return on their capital may constrain him or her from acting on this preference.

Another example, which pertains particularly to my work, is the exploitation of natural resources. Throughout the world fishermen are depleting stocks to such an extent that they may never recover. A great deal of the cost of this behaviour will be borne by future generations.

They may consider that we have failed in our ethical responsibility to conserve our common heritage. However, fishermen's actions are not necessarily immoral; they simply reflect the framework of resource exploitation within which they operate, which requires them to maximise their catches and often destroy their own livelihoods.

In the face of the ethical shades of grey resulting from the vastly differing circumstances that arise in business, I have no hard and fast rules on how to translate my personal values into my work. However, where a decision has ethical implications I try to understand what bearings the circumstances in which I operate have on it and what constraints there are on my judgment. By doing so I am best able to determine how to apply my values.

The apparently principled stance that child labour is unacceptable ignores the realities in which many children are employed in the developing world PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAN AID

I work in environmental consultancy, providing advice to various organisations on the environmental implications of their actions. I chose this discipline because I thought it would best balance my interests, the promotion of my values, and the financial rewards.

Four years on, I still believe that the opportunities for promoting environmental protection are greater for me in environmental consultancy than they would be in any other type of organisation. However, experience has taught me that environmental consultants are often employed to provide justifications for environmental degradation.

On a number of occasions during my work, I have been pushed to compromise my values for the sake of satisfying my client. An example in which this occurred recently was during an appraisal of a charge levied by the British government on traders who produce waste.

The purpose of this study was to provide an independent review of the equity and efficiency of the charging scheme, which was intended to recuperate from traders the cost of the treatment of their waste. My role was to review the way in which charges are calculated and to assess the degree to which they reflect the cost incurred by the government.

AS IS frequently the case, the question of equity depended upon the perspective taken by the reviewer — there was no definitive technical answer. With one methodology I was able to show that waste producers were paying a charge that more or less reflected the cost they imposed on the government, whereas with another I could show that the government was recovering more through the charge that it cost to provide the waste treatment service.

As I was developing my conclusions I felt under considerable pressure to advise that the charge was fair, regardless of there being no real answer. The pressure came from the government (the client), which was keen to justify its actions, and, more insidiously, from within my consultancy, which was keen to conclude the study quickly and not to displease a potentially important future client. I was aware that I could easily judge the charge fair with impunity because the methods I had used were relatively complex and were not fully understood by any of the parties involved.

Initially, I thought the way out of this dilemma was to declare that there was no right answer. But I decided that a decision had to be made and that I was in the best position to make it.

Having reflected on the circumstances, and having determined that I was constrained by the need to make a decision, I then evaluated the degree of freedom I had in the decision and concluded I had a free hand. If I were to ignore ethical considerations I could paint the picture however I wanted.

On reflection I decided that I could not judge in the government's favour and know that I had done so arbitrarily, and so I pronounced that the traders had been overcharged.

Learning about the business of mutual benefit

Kensuke Kishikawa

WHILE I was a university student majoring in economics, I was strongly influenced and encouraged by a book written by Matsushita's founder, Kounosuke Matsushita, a famous Japanese entrepreneur. He left many legendary entrepreneurial lessons and aphorisms for future Japanese entrepreneurs.

A favourite example is, "No company can thrive without mutual prosperity in society". My subsequent employment experience at Matsushita reinforced and developed my understanding of Mr Matsushita's approach. His vision of the relationship between a business and a society is that they are co-operative partners. I have adopted a version of his philosophy as my own.

It is essential for enterprises to develop a strong, trusting relationship with their society. Businesses are part of the societies within which they operate and, as such, they are partners with their customers and clients. Therefore it is essential that businesses gain and develop the confidence of members of their society.

If they lose this confidence, then a business is doomed to fail. For example, many people have lost confidence in Japanese financial institutions because they have hidden their debts on their financial statements. As a result, many people have lost their jobs and many foreign clients distrust Japanese banks.

Because of this situation, a foreign operator has become the leading stock brokerage in Japan, and the coming Big Bang financial reforms are likely to exacerbate the flight of money from Japanese banks. Such trust, once lost, is extremely difficult to regain.

My approach to business ethics is to develop trust between customers and companies, an idea that I developed from Mr Matsushita's emphasis on growing with the society in which one operates. Considering the lack of confidence and trust in present-day Japanese financial institutions, not to mention the government and the bureaucracy, I think such an approach to ethics will be fundamental to restarting confidence in Japanese enterprises.

My personal experience of the dilemma of ethics in business was gained when I worked for a leading manufacturer of electrical goods in France, where I promoted consumer electronic appliances such as audio components, TVs and VCRs to retailers.

The company was planning to launch a type of video and audio CD players that required CDs registered only for its format in the fall of 1995. This was a dilemma because I thought the product may bring unnecessary expense to the consumers who bought it. It would certainly cause customers to lose faith in Matsushita.

The plan to distribute the software, the video CDs, in France was not well thought out. Moreover I was not convinced that the format would eventually be standardised because we knew that we were going to launch another, more innovative, image CD standard — DVD — superior in quality and expected to dominate markets in the near future.

The video CD was also an ill-conceived strategy for the company because if not enough of them were sold, then the company would take heavy financial losses.

I protested strongly against the plan to launch such a product in France, arguing that consumers would lose confidence in the company if we eventually stopped distributing CDs and selling these CD players. I made my protest in letters to company executives at the head office in Japan and discussed the issue with the company's brand managers, although I knew that the introduction of the products had been decided several months before my arrival.

The people in favour of the plan insisted that the launch would be as successful in Europe as it had been in Asia. However, in Asia those who purchase these CD players are karaoke lovers and most of the software available in Asia is to do with karaoke, not film. Karaoke is not very popular in Europe. Although I raised this point, my protest was ignored and several CD players of this type were launched in the autumn of 1995.

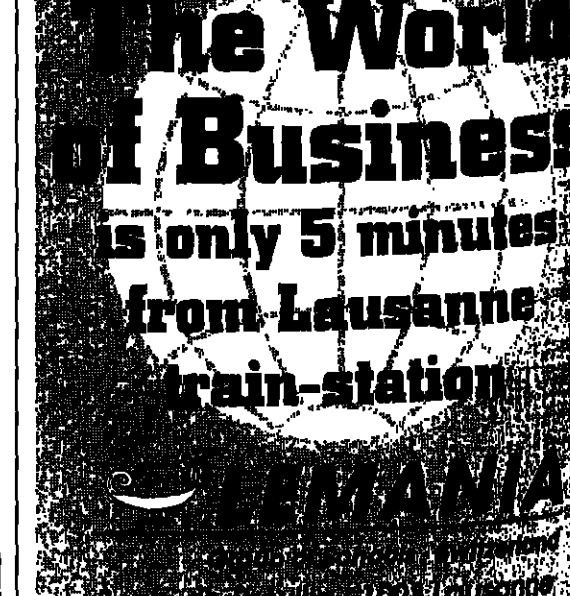
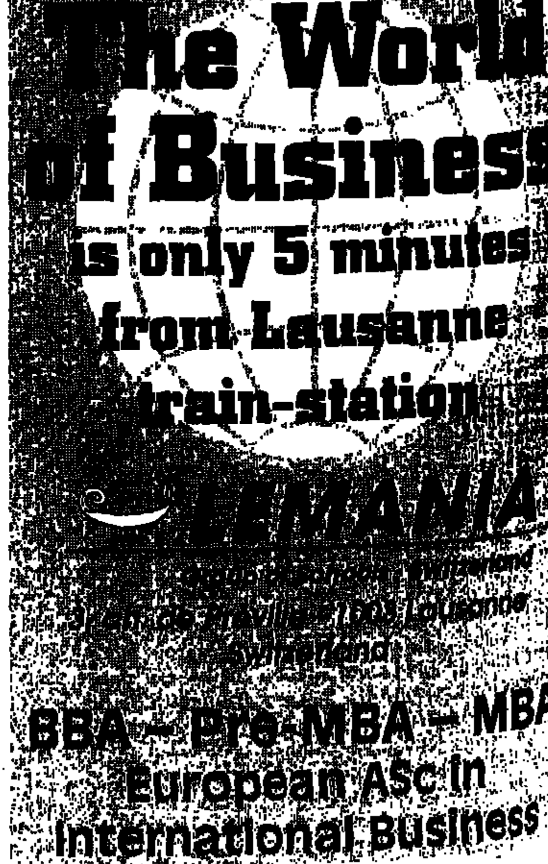
The sales of these products were disastrous due to the shortage of compatible software. Our clients were angry when they saw that the market was shrinking rapidly because of the withdrawal of manufacturers one after the other. This failure stemmed from lack of market analysis and poor sales strategy. I felt embarrassed when I went to see angry clients with the sales staff. Meanwhile the people who planned and approved the project stayed in the office.

If we are working for the public and are concerned about our consumers, we should not market such products. I strongly believe that we have a commitment as industrialists to distribute products that our customers will be satisfied with for a long time.







France unfazed by Clinton indiscretion

Le Monde Reporters

THE initial reaction of most French MPs and government members on reading independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr's report on President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky, was one of wry amusement and incredulity.

They say that they are appalled by the report's crudeness, its violation of personal privacy and its disclosure of intimate detail. They are alarmed at the way Clinton has been made to look ridiculous by revelations about his sex life, and feel that the office of the presidency has consequently been demeaned.

"There has been a perversion of politics in the United States," says the first secretary of the Socialist party, François Hollande.

Simone Veil, a former minister, probably best summed up the general feeling of dismay when she told radio listeners that "the first victim of the scandal will be democracy". She added that she thought Starr was "a horrible individual whom we may regard as not only a voyeur but perhaps a sex maniac".

Alain Krivine, a Trotskyite, says: "The United States has a dismal and disturbing form of democracy: it allows a president to get away with massacring thousands of people, yet threatens him with impeachment because of an inappropriate drop of sperm."

Philippe de Villiers, a rightwing politician who was for a long time an advocate of strict morals in people's private lives, has come round to a more traditional defence of the family as a social institution: "The protection of our right to privacy features in the universal declaration of human rights," he says. "The private lives of both politicians and the rest of the population should be protected — except of course when public funds have been misappropriated. It's very easy to drag down a public office, but much harder to rehabilitate it."

The employment minister, Martine Aubry, told television viewers: "We're talking about two perfectly consenting adults, it seems to me. I can't understand all this lewdness and indecency. A democracy should protect people's private lives — individual freedoms are at stake. It's not the job of a political or legal institution to say what it regards as moral or not."

Charles de Courson, a centrist, agrees: "The president's private life is his problem, unless it affects the workings of public life. I can find nothing in the report which suggests that his relationship with Lewinsky affected his political stance."

Some, such as Guy Hascoët, a Green party member, see the affair as "the dregs of an inquisitorial Puritanism that is typical of the United States."

"It only goes to show what a cultural gulf lies between us and the Americans," says Michel Crépeau, a former minister.

But some politicians, no doubt convinced that what happens in the US has a spillover effect in Europe 10 years later, believe that the law could be similarly perverted in France.

"People say: 'It's America!' But we should stop and think for a moment," says François Bayrou, head of the centre-right grouping Union pour la Démocratie Française. "What lies behind the destabilisation of Clinton is an unstoppable chain reaction involving the judiciary and the media. And that is something which can happen in any democracy.

"Politicians should examine their consciences. They allow their families and children to be given such media exposure that they almost encourage and justify this kind of attack. I myself believe they should show a little more reserve."

Roselyne Bachelot, a neo-Gaullist, takes a harder line: "Clinton made a pact with the Americans on the theme of the family. When he was elected, he said: 'You vote for one Clinton, and you get two,' pointing to his wife. He exhibited himself with his family. In other words, he gave his enemies a stick to beat him with. In the end it all boils down to election promises."

It is rightwing politicians who take the harshest view of Clinton's behaviour, though none of them has a kind word for Starr. Several of them feel that anyone occupying such a symbolic and powerful office as that of president has a duty to set an example.

"You just don't womanise in the Elysée Palace or the White House. It's pathetic," says André Santini, a centre-right MP.

And Charles Pasqua, a former minister, believes that "a president should behave a little better than that".

The prime minister, Lionel Jospin, has so far refused to comment on the Clinton affair. But he is known to be in favour of keeping politicians' private lives out of the limelight.

The leader of the far-right National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, says: "When you're a head of state you should behave like one. This was more a case of a kid getting up to some hanky-panky. If it was a private affair he shouldn't have conducted it in the Oval Office. Places where power and responsibilities are exercised should be respected."

MPs in the still largely deserted corridors of the National Assembly, when asked what they thought about respecting privacy, seemed more interested in the news that Christine Deviers-Joncour — who has been charged in connection with the Elf corruption case, and is a close friend of Roland Dumas, a former foreign minister and now president of the Constitutional Court — is about to bring out a book about her experiences called La Putain de la République (The Republic's Whore).

(September 17)

SERGUEI 98.

Russian sailor kills nine in hostage crisis

Sophie Shihab in Moscow

ON THE day that politicians were trumpeting the news that they had come up with a solution to the political crisis, their fellow Russians — who face the prospect of a harsh winter — were glued to their television sets watching another crisis unfold.

They were seeing hostage-taking of a different kind. It took place on September 11 in a nuclear submarine anchored at the Skalitsky base near Murmansk, 100km from Norway.

News bulletins initially reported that a 19-year-old naval rating, Alexander Kuzminykh, who was due to finish his military service in three months, had killed a guard on the quayside and stolen his machinegun. He then apparently killed six fellow sailors who were asleep in a cabin, before taking two others hostage in the torpedo room and threatening to blow up the submarine.

Russia's defence minister was alerted and anti-terrorist commandos were sent to the base, along with psychologists, a priest and Kuzminykh's mother, a cleaning lady from St Petersburg.

Kuzminykh reportedly agreed to speak to his mother, but refused to give himself up and insisted that he be "allowed to get some sleep". It appears he had by then killed his two hostages.

What happened next is unclear. A statement quoted by the Interfax news agency simply said: "At 0.18am on Saturday, September 12, the operation aimed at disarming the rating who had killed eight of his comrades was completed. The rating was killed in the course of the operation."

Official sources insist that the hunter-killer submarine, an Akula (shark), was carrying "only conventional weapons". Akulas are always equipped not only with torpedoes, but with nuclear or conventional cruise missiles. Television reports from the Skalitsky base during the incident showed that submarines anchored next to the one where the tragedy occurred had been moved away.

Hunter-killer nuclear submarines are, in theory, manned by carefully selected crews. But it seems that only half the officers posted to such submarines are actually ever on duty. The caviar that used to be *de rigueur* in the mess disappeared long ago.

Last May an alarmed former armaments security officer told the daily newspaper, Isvestia, that it had been officially decided that the operational life of the submarines' missiles, which had come to an end, should be extended.

No attempt has been made to solve the problem of the hundreds of "atomic coffins" anchored off the Kola peninsula and elsewhere — it would cost billions of dollars to disarm them. Nor has anything been done to improve the plight of national servicemen who, in desperation, regularly commit serious crimes for no apparent reason other than to escape from their bases.

(September 13-14)

China launches charm offensive on rights

Frédéric Bobin in Beijing

THE Chinese government turned on the charm in a big way during the 10-day tour of the country by Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which ended on September 15. The visit illustrated Beijing's new strategy, which is to "discuss" human rights courteously with a view to improving its new-found international respectability, but to give little ground on basics.

After meeting officials in Beijing, Shanghai and Tibet, Robinson was received by President Jiang Zemin on September 14. He told her the government was determined to construct a "socialist democracy" and a "socialist legal system" that would guarantee individual freedoms.

But, reiterating one of the government's traditional arguments, he added that China was still a developing country whose priority was to feed and clothe the population.

Robinson said that her visit had the very modest aim of encouraging the government to sign the UN convention on civil and political rights. The deputy prime minister, Qian Qichen, confirmed that China would sign the convention in October.

However, Robinson's concern to keep a low profile so as not to offend her hosts came as a disappointment to many dissidents, who were not allowed to meet her.

When Chu Hailan, wife of jailed dissident Liu Nianchun, waited for Robinson in front of her hotel in the hope of handing her a letter, she was arrested and roughed up by police.

Dissidents are often harassed in China during visits by foreign dignitaries, including those who are the strongest advocates of a "dialogue" with Beijing on human rights.

The regime is a past master at the art of blowing hot and cold in its treatment of dissidents. The aim in alternately cracking down on them, then easing restrictions, is to send favourable signals to Western capitals while at the same time making it absolutely clear that it is prepared to go just so far, and no further.

Sometimes, for example, Beijing gives the impression that its repressive apparatus is about to become more flexible. At the end of last week, for example, dissidents in Shandong and Hubei provinces got a fairly polite reception when they handed in an application to register a new party, the Chinese Democracy party, at their local civil affairs offices.

In both provinces the bureaucrats on duty accepted the application and said it would be "examined". However, just before President Clinton's visit in June, dissidents who made a similar application in Zhejiang province were arrested.

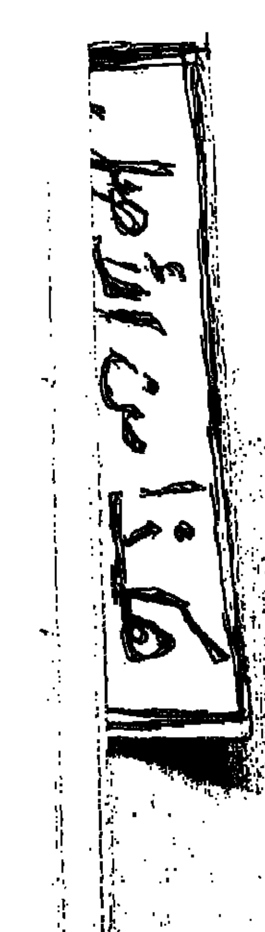
In the case of Robinson's visit the move might have been a trap, aimed at flushing out potential democrats. Equally, it may have been a temporary sop to the high commissioner. Only time will tell what the Chinese authorities' long-term aims are, but in this case there was undoubtedly a change of attitude on their part.

But the glimmer of hope did not last. A few days later news came that Shi Binhai, a journalist on the China Economic Times — which is too reformist for the government's taste — was arrested. He has not been heard of since.

A former activist in the pro-democracy movement that demonstrated in Tiananmen Square in 1989 — a record that did not stop him from subsequently being taken on by a government-controlled newspaper — Shi recently published a collection of articles by 40 people calling for political reform.

Was that his crime? Or was it more likely to have been his habit of writing scathing exposés of corruption in Beijing city council? His arrest comes as a warning to those Chinese intellectuals who have published books on political reform in recent months.

(September 16)



Heart of the matter

Pierre Lepape

Marguerite Duras
by Laure Adler
Gallimard 636pp 155 francs

EVERY YEAR sees the publication of about 100 biographies of writers. They cater to every kind of taste and readership. Some are scholarly, others anecdotal; some the result of many years of academic research, others hasty reworkings of earlier biographies; some are eulogies, others indictments. A biography can sometimes even be an major intellectual event, such as Roland Barthes's biography of Jules Michelet or Jean-Paul Sartre's of Gustave Flaubert.

Laure Adler's biography of the writer and film-maker Marguerite Duras is a different, almost sociological, kind of event. For Duras was a star. Not many modern writers are stars. It is not a profession conducive to stardom. Most writers who — out of inclination, curiosity or vanity — accept the mysterious laws of stardom get their literary fingers burnt.

But Duras did not. Thanks to her unbelievable energy and an infallible instinct, she managed to keep everything intact: her *oeuvre* and the cinematic version of her *oeuvre*, reality and myth, the construction of her life and of her legend, the harshness of the truth and the smokescreens of untruth.

Whether one likes Duras's books or regards her as a minor novelist, there is no denying their alchemy, which — miraculously or grotesquely depending on one's point of view — enables her to meld literature with an account of her life and times and with the siren voices of myth.

Adler says Duras did not like the idea of someone writing her biography. She jealously kept that task for herself. She felt that the truth about her life was what she wrote about it. As a writer she was clearly right: Adler has the good sense and tact not to challenge the writer's truth. She records it and charts its development and transformation by examining Duras's books, their various drafts, and her notes.

The kind of truth a biographer tries to piece together is of course quite different: it is the most accurate possible reconstruction of actual facts. A good biography confronts those two realities without ever deciding which should take precedence over the other. Adler's great achievement is to have done that with unswerving rigour.



Duras . . . unbelievable energy and infallible instinct PHOTO: JULIO DONOSO

It was no easy task. Duras was an expert liar, or, in Adler's words, "an old hand at the inaccurate confession", sometimes even to the point of no longer being able to distinguish between what she had experienced, what she thought she had experienced, and what she had written about it.

That kind of behaviour usually prompts biographers to go for the jugular. They end up debunking their subject. Adler never falls into that trap. Because she loves and respects Duras, she strives to identify and understand what she concealed and distorted, and to work out why she did so. She is neither public prosecutor nor defence counsel.

Adler's investigation cannot be faulted. She is both a journalist and a historian. In her capacity as a journalist she visited all Duras's haunts, from the Indochina where she was born and spent an unhappy childhood to the flat in the Normandy resort of Trouville that was her last place of residence.

Adler unearthed new evidence and questioned all those who remained her friends to the end, as well as those who did not. She delved into hitherto unexamined archives, including the Duras collection at the Imec (Institute of Contemporary Publishing Memoirs). She cross-checked her sources and compared different versions of events. In cases where they are irremediably contradictory, she simply reproduces both versions without plumping for either.

Adler throws new and sometimes moving light on the young Duras's Chinese lover (the model for L'Amant), on her life as an attractive and promiscuous student in Paris, on the Resistance, on the murky Delval case *(see box below)*, on the return of her husband Robert Antelme from the concentration camps, on her relations with the Communist party, and on many other topics that Duras, in conversation and in her writings, had turned into legends.

"Tell me you love me," Duras pleads again and again in her feverish letters to Dyonis Mascolo, the father of her child. He can never tell her strongly enough that he loves her. No one ever does — neither her mother, nor her brothers, friends, lovers, publishers or even readers.

Duras perhaps focused not so much on love itself, which she described so successfully in so many forms, as on an ever-more insatiable craving for love. This is where Adler's book will probably appeal to those very people whom Duras's novels irritate or leave cold.

Behind the seductress, man-eater, egocentric woman of letters and sculptor of her own monument we find a quite extraordinary concentration of sheer energy — a force and an obstinacy that enabled her to forge her own destiny and fulfil herself as a woman in a still male-dominated literary milieu.

Duras's "nastiness", which she so often flaunted self-accusingly, cannot be seen in isolation from that struggle she waged, sometimes unwittingly, and sometimes self-destructively.

And even deeper down, at once concealed and betrayed by the language Duras uses and by the heady vapours of success and alcohol, there can be detected a fragile, distraught woman who so desperately wanted to be loved that she convinced herself she could achieve anything she desired.

(August 26)

Truth stranger than fiction

CHARLES Delval, who collaborated with the Gestapo during the war, appears as Rabier in Duras's autobiographical book, La Douleur. He is central to one of the more disturbing aspects of Duras's activities during the Occupation.

Delval succeeded in breaking up the Resistance network to which Robert Antelme, Duras's husband, belonged, and which depended on the National Movement of Prisoners of War and Deportees, whose leader was "Morland" (François Mitterrand, later to become French president).

In the course of trying to track Antelme down after he had been deported to Buchenwald, Duras had an ambiguous relationship with Delval. After the Liberation, she took part in his interrogation under torture. Delval was tried and shot at the beginning of 1945. Duras never found out that six months after Delval's death his wife had a baby whose father was Duras's own partner, Dyonis Mascolo.

(August 26)

Writer with a dark core who reinvented herself

Laure Adler talks to **Marion Van Renterghem** about her new biography of Marguerite Duras

HOW does one write the biography of an artist who constantly reinvented her life in her writings?

The book made me think a lot about the borderline between truth, lies, memory, biography, history and literature. I was on the trail of someone who was by definition unknowable, because everything about her was unsuspected. She recognised the unsuspected in herself, giving it various names, such as "the inner shadow" or the "dark core".

What underpins her whole *oeuvre* is the question: why am I alive when the person who gave birth to me didn't want me? That distortion of her existence prevented her from ever becoming reconciled with herself. Her urge to write lies at the heart of the incredible violence she did to herself in order to be able to cheat all along the line — about her past, her lovers, her friends and her political beliefs.

She didn't like the idea of a biography being written about her, yet gave all her papers to an archive shortly before her death. Why?

Because, I think, she was deeply hurt that no one believed her when she published La Douleur. She said the book was based on notebooks she had found in a cupboard, whereas most critics thought she was spinning yet another yarn, and embroidering her own life once again.

Her last partner, Yann Andréa, gave the Imec archive 18 boxes of diaries, recipes, synopses, ideas for books, fragments of poetry, philosophical jottings, political observations, dialogues with herself — odds and ends that completely invalidate the established view of Duras as a writer.

First there's her extraordinary capacity for work. Her manuscripts are like a badly injured person swathed in bandages. They consist of paper that has been ripped apart, sewn up, reworked, punctured and pieced together again. She constantly calls herself into question.

It's moving to see how each published book went through at least five or six versions, which she rewrote by hand from beginning to end, with tiny literary or dramatic variations, until she got something she found acceptable — but no more than acceptable; for with one or two exceptions she didn't like her books, especially not L'Amant, and remained self-critical to the end.

There have been cuts in your book. Why?

Duras's son, Jean Mascolo, gave me access to the Imec papers, which no one had seen. He totally trusted me, but didn't know what treasures they included. He asked for cuts only in some of those unpublished fragments, but not in my text. So there was no censorship. The unpublished material, which Marguerite herself didn't want published, is entirely his property.

Two texts in particular worried him, one where his mother justified the fact she had helped Charles Delval when he was interrogated after the Liber[ation] *(see box below)*, the other [on] Christine Villemin [who was ac]cused, then cleared, of murd[ering] her small son], in which Duras [was] carried away in a fantasised [no]tion of sisterliness. In all, [...] lines were cut.

There's been a row in the pres[s] between Robert Antelme's widow, Monique, and Jorge Semprun, who was angry at having been portrayed as a Communist party informer.

He didn't like the word "inf[orm]ing", which appeared in an i[nter]view with me in the June iss[ue of] Lire, but which was not used b[y me] or in the sense Semprun interp[reted] it. Duras held Semprun respon[sible] for her exclusion from the pa[rty.] Semprun denies this. The truth [is to] be found in the hysterical [at]sphere of mutual surveillance [main]tained by party members at [the] time.

You examine Duras's ambigu[ous] attitude during the Occupati[on] which was first revealed by Pierre Péan in his book Une Jeunesse Française: François Mitterrand 1934-1947. Do you regard Duras as a "Mitterrandian" figure?

Péan was of great help to m[e. He] showed how late Duras's gr[oup of] friends joined the Resistance [and] raised the Delval case. Duras [al]ways played down her role in [the] German-run Publishing C[ontrol] Commission. Does that mean [she] was a collaborator? She did n[ot] have a position of responsib[ility.] Was she playing a double g[ame?] She said she was, but I can't [come] up with historical proof for it.

She was thoroughly "Mi[tter]randian" in that, as was once s[aid of] Mitterrand, she was like an [18th-]century writing desk: you op[en a] drawer, which opens on to an[other] drawer, and so on until the [last] drawer, whose key has been los[t for]ever. They were two *monstres s[acrés]* who never stopped lying to o[thers] and to themselves.

Duras believed in revoluti[on;] she believed in love. And bec[ause] she believed the world sh[ould] change she joined the Resista[nce,] took up the Algerian cause d[uring] the war and got involved in the [May] 1968 events. Each time she [was] disappointed. But she did sinc[erely] believe in those causes.

It was both a form of suffering, [an] almost mystical vocation, an[d a] devouring of herself and of her lived experience, which she ev[entu]ally erased and replaced with a[n] invented imaginary life that se[rved] her purpose.

That was what made things [diffi]cult for me. While writing a [bio]graphy from a chronological [and] historical perspective, I also h[ad to] observe one absolute prin[ciple:] what remains of Marguerite [Duras] is her writing. She risked ev[ery]thing for it.

(August 26)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colom[bani]

American and BA fly global network kite

Julia Finch

BRITISH Airways and American Airlines, which are awaiting government clearance to set up a formal transatlantic alliance, on Monday announced plans to build a new global airline network.

The airlines have signed up nine other international carriers and will market their alliance under the Oneworld marketing concept.

The new network will allow passengers to travel between more than 800 cities around the world for just one payment and with just one ticket, and will employ a quarter of a million staff.

BA and AA, which together serve 500 destinations, have signed up Canadian Airlines, Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific and Qantas as the three other "core" members of Oneworld. Canadian serves 140 destinations from its Vancouver base, Qantas — in which BA owns a 25 per cent stake — flies to 100 cities, and Cathay operates 50 vital East Asia routes. Last year the five airlines handled 160 million passengers and made a combined profit of $2 billion.

The other six airlines expected to join the network are Japan Airlines, Spain's Iberia, Finn Air, American West, Denmark's Maersk Air and GB Airways.

Oneworld, which will be marketed as a worldwide travel brand, will be a direct competitor to the Star network set up 18 months ago by United Airlines and Lufthansa, which includes the Scandinavian SAS, Varig of Brazil and Thai Airways. Star serves 600 destinations and employs 230,000 people.

The rationale behind the new global airline networks is to prevent companies losing passengers — and profit — as customers change carriers to reach their final destination.

The most powerful alliance will be that which can funnel the most passengers into its network and keep them in its system from the beginning of their journey to their final destination.

But unions warned that BA plans to use its newly unveiled global alliance as a vehicle for consolidation and job cuts.

Their fears were heightened by an admission by Cathay Pacific that staff reductions were to be considered.

Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Atlantic, said the Government should not allow BA to sign up deals like this which would reduce competition and raise fares. He added: "For Oneworld read one company, one monopoly and millions of passengers taken for a ride."

The fanfare failed to light up the City, which marked down BA shares 12½p to 347½p on Monday.

Amid the silence of the sushi bars

The only thing on the increase in Japan is the suicide rate, writes **Larry Elliott** in Tokyo

IT IS so normal it is quite eerie. The neon lights still flash in the Ginza, the streets are still full of bustling people, the shops offer gizmos and Givenchy as they did when the economy was booming at the end of the 1980s.

But appearances can be deceptive. This is not the late 1980s and the world's second biggest economy is no longer booming, it is hurting. Consumers are not spending and companies are going bust in record numbers. Growth figures are down, suicides are up. Japan may be hard and shiny on the outside, but it is soft on the inside.

Last week the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, was able to see for himself the empty sushi bars of downturn Tokyo. There was a Wagnerian quality to his arrival as the emissary of the Group of Seven industrial nations.

Coming into land at Tokyo's Narita airport, the plane carrying Mr Brown was buffeted by the 120km/h winds from Typhoon 5 sweeping northwards across the Pacific Rim. The Jumbo headed south over raging seas, finally landing safely at Nagoya before refuelling and returning to Tokyo once the storm had abated.

It was only a temporary setback for the Chancellor, who arrived in time to make a keynote speech to a crucial meeting of the International Monetary Fund, but was it a sign of something more serious for the global economy?

Mr Brown says not. "I believe that the essential answer to the problems of the moment is not less globalisation, not new national structures to separate and isolate countries, but stronger international structures to make globalisation work in harder times as well as easier ones. Our urgent need is closer co-operation, continuing dialogue and an unwavering commitment to open commerce. We must not let temporary instability put global progress at risk."

Yet the means of achieving global progress are now undergoing the first real reassessment in more than two decades. The past month has heard the unmistakable sound of knives being sharpened to slaughter sacred cows. The first of these is that one-size-fits-all policies can be adapted to suit all economies, no matter how different they might be in size, industrial make-up or development. When even the managing director of the IMF, Michel Camdessus, accepts — as he did last week — that "not all markets, not all economies, not all crises are the same", something is clearly afoot.





Eye of the storm . . . Typhoon conditions batter Tokyo citizens already gripped by economic gloom PHOTO: AP/KYODO NEWS

Second, the idea that the only good solution to a problem is a free-market solution has been tested to destruction. It looks likely, for example, that Japan will try to solve its banking crisis by nationalising the ailing Long-Term Credit Bank. What is more, it will receive the approval of the G7 if it does so.

Similarly, the West is taking a more pragmatic approach to the use of capital controls by developing countries. This time last year, the very notion that such egregious interference in the workings of the market was being contemplated, let alone implemented, would have given the West a bad case of the vapours. This year complacency is out, concern is in.

It was the sense that we are witnessing the end of an era that made last week's statement by the G7 so significant. The West is starting to take the threat of a global slump seriously. But it was the language used in the statement — and the interventionism that underpinned it — which suggested that change was in the air.

Inflation, the G7 said, was low or falling in many countries, and the balance of risks had shifted. They would therefore explore ways to "reinforce existing programmes in support of growth-oriented policies".

In a sense, this was a statement of the blindingly obvious. It has been clear for some time that tough macroeconomic measures and the over-supply of products associated with globalisation had completely changed the outlook for inflation.

Since 1973-74 every peak in inflation has been lower than the last, with Britain's inflation rate now one tenth of that reached in mid-1975. Inflation may be dormant rather than dead, but for now it is yesterday's problem, and the G7 seems at last to have recognised that.

As in the 1970s, part of the problem lies with commodity prices, although this time it is the producers and not the consumers who are feeling the pinch. And whereas it was the US, traumatised by Vietnam and Watergate, which had a crisis of confidence in the mid-1970s, this time it is that decade's wonder economy — Japan — that has lapsed into introspection and despair.

Interestingly, the Anglo-Saxon elements of the G7 were quicker to appreciate the new situation than some of the continental countries. Britain and the US were keen to sign up to a robust form of words from the G7, but it took some arm-twisting at a meeting of central bank governors in Basle — in which the Bank of England chief Eddie George played an integral part — before the Germans and the French would sign up.

But here was a bitter irony. Europe's obsession with the single currency means there can be no co-ordinated cut in interest rates. Yet a co-ordinated cut in interest rates is precisely what is needed, not just to put a floor under falling stock markets. Markets in the allegedly non-interventionist Anglo-Saxon economies demanded no less.

And once last week's G7 statement suggested that world leaders were not prepared to see the idea of laissez-faire tested to destruction the markets whooped for joy.

But only for so long. By the middle of the week, there was a sneaking realisation that the G7 was talking a good game, but delivering very little.

The US Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan, and Mr George acknowledged that there would be no co-ordinated cut in rates, impossible without the co-operation of the Europeans.

So what happens now? It is clear that the mood has changed. Interventionism is back in vogue for the first time since the days of T Rex and Slade. Demand is seen as important. There is support for reform of the IMF and for a reinvigorated internationalism. The belief of the G7 is that this may be a crisis of global capital, but not the crisis of global capital.

However, to ensure that one does not turn into the other, action is needed and it is needed urgently. Mr Brown was on the ground in Japan for just 21 hours last week. When he arrived markets were rising; when he left they were on the slide once more.

In Brief

THE Asian crisis is more serious than any in the past 30 years, wiping out some $260 billion of global output and threatening a worldwide recession. Unctad, the UN's trade and development arm, warned.

JAPAN suffered a new blow to its prestige when its long-term foreign currency rating was cut for the first time since the war, and its public debt compared to that of Greece by Fitch IBA, a British firm that evaluates the ability of companies and states to repay their debts.

LEADING shares in London plunged below the 5,000 level on Monday for the first time this year as dealers took fright at the darkening global outlook, fears of a British recession and continuing political vacuum in the United States.

SHELL, the world's second largest oil company, is to close its UK headquarters with the loss of up to 2,000 jobs. The company warned that oil prices, already at a 25-year low, would remain depressed for up to three years.

EMI, the record label behind chart-toppers the Spice Girls, opened the door to takeover predators when its shares went into a tail-spin after yet another profits warning.

ANNA MURDOCH, estranged wife of the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, is to retire next month from the board of News Corporation, where she has served as a director since 1990.

BRITISH Telecom received $7 billion for its sale of its 21 per cent stake in MCI to WorldCom, leaving it with a $1.6 billion pre-tax profit on its investment.

VICKERS, the British defence and engineering group, announced plans to cut more than 1,000 jobs over the next 15 months and close its tank manufacturing plant in Leeds.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates September 21	Sterling rates September 14
Australia	2.8702-2.8744	2.8161-2.8188
Austria	19.92-19.94	20.08-20.10
Belgium	58.37-58.49	58.87-58.97
Canada	2.5656-2.5682	2.5394-2.5416
Denmark	10.80-10.81	10.86-10.87
France	9.49-9.50	9.57-9.67
Germany	2.8322-2.8343	2.8542-2.8571
Hong Kong	13.04-13.05	12.98-12.99
Ireland	1.1308-1.1351	1.1388-1.1432
Italy	2,797-2,800	2,818-2,821
Japan	224.54-224.81	222.97-223.23
Netherlands	3.1932-3.1965	3.2194-3.2228
New Zealand	3.3487-3.3564	3.2533-3.2592
Norway	12.60-12.61	12.69-12.70
Portugal	290.21-290.55	292.53-292.83
Spain	240.38-240.70	242.39-242.67
Sweden	13.35-13.37	13.19-13.21
Switzerland	2.3285-2.3315	2.3533-2.3561
USA	1.6834-1.6844	1.6764-1.6772
ECU	1.4419-1.4438	1.4523-1.4539

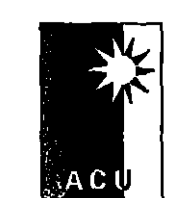
FTSE 100 Share Index down 116.3 at 4893.3. FTSE 250 Index down 163.6 at 4863.1. Gold up $2.75 at $293.00.

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PNGUT (Papua New Guinea)	SL/L Agriculture	W46853
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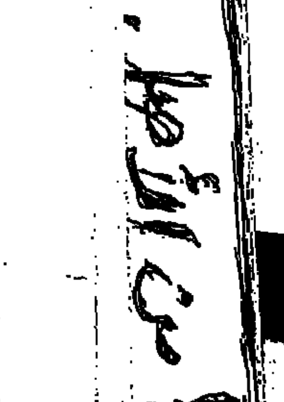
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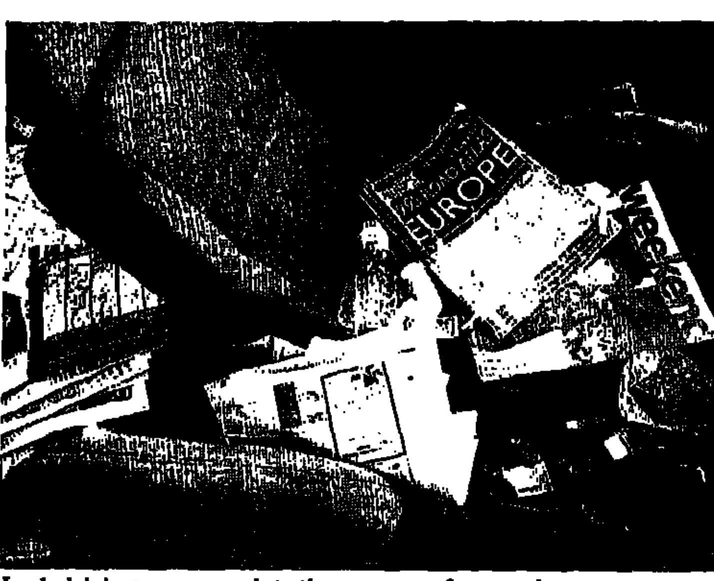
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Don't forget to leave it a tip

The mess in your car is part of who you are, says **Nicholas Lezard**



Junk driving . . . a peep into the recesses of our souls PHOTO: SEAN SMITH

I HAVE come to a conclusion about the state of society, and it's this: there is not enough rubbish in people's cars any more. We are becoming too fastidious about the insides of our vehicles. And it will not do.

The strange thing is — or used to be — that people who could be perfectly neat and tidy when it came to the insides of their own home let their standards slip a bit when it came to their car.

One friend of mine — fastidiously spick and span at home (he taught me, once, how to wipe debris from a kitchen table; the secret lies in sweeping the arm holding the cloth or sponge in an expansively wide arc, instead of dabbing at individual crumbs in a desultory fashion) — had a car so full of empty fag and crisp packets, Galaxy wrappers, half-empty cartons of Ribena, voided cassette boxes, and socks (yes, socks) that he once wondered whether he could have it reclassified as a council tip and thereby save himself the bother and expense of getting a new tax disc each year.

He didn't, of course, and his marriage failed when his wife ran into the back of a Volkswagen Passat. She'd thought, at first, that the brakes had gone, but what had happened was that an empty Coke can had rolled under the pedal.

I always thought this was something of an over-reaction, but then I am inured to rubbish in the car. In fact, I expect it. For, as anyone else who owns a pre-1990 Vauxhall Cavalier will tell you, there is an obscure but rigidly enforced bylaw which states that all second-hand Cavaliers will fail their MOT test unless they have a large dent in the rear offside door and an empty box from Kentucky Fried Chicken rolling around the back seat somewhere. I've got mine — and I don't even eat stuff from KFC, or know any one else who does.

At the moment I'm quite proud of the level of rubbish in my car: there's a child's trike (having children makes it impossible ever to have a clean car again), rubber balls (from tennis to football size), various bits of wood my daughter took a shine to, a tin of Whiskas, several half-finished lollipops, two pints of 10W40 oil sloshing loose around the spare tyre and a microwave oven in the back seat. (No one is sure whether it has been picked up from the menders or is due to go there, so it just lies there in an indeterminate state of being either broken or in perfect working order, like Schrödinger's cat.)

This is nothing compared with the two-week period when the back of the car was taken up by a knackered full-size bicycle, which we had somehow managed to fit in, but then couldn't work out how to get out again without folding the front wheel in two or cutting the car in half. Actually, I don't think we ever got it out in the end. We sold the car and said we'd throw the bicycle in for an extra tenner. Which more or less doubled the amount of money we got for the car, but that's neither here nor there.

Another friend has a kind of recycling scheme, whereby every time a door opens, a little bit of rubbish falls out — just about the same amount as he somehow manages to add during the course of each journey. That way everything is kept nice and fresh. He also has a fantastically sensible trick of writing down the directions to unfamiliar destinations in chalk on the passenger glove-compartment, so he doesn't have to faff around with an A to Z map at junctions. While this is not mess *per se*, it does add to the general air of comfortable chaos, as well as a charming patina of chalk dust on anyone sitting in the passenger seat.

The point about mess in the car is that it provides evidence that it has been lived in. I seem to recall that John Thaw and Dennis Waterman's jam-jar in The Sweeney was always full of half-empty sandwiches and polystyrene cups. It was nice to see detectives in American cop shows chucking pizza boxes and coffee cups into the back seat as they set of for yet another high-speed chase.

For we have entered an age when the car is not a cosy, lived-in area, but an extension of the spotless, squeaky-clean fantasy peddled to us by mendacious advertisers. It is distressing to get into a perfectly clean car. You feel you can't relax, and you suspect that the driver's home has sofas that are still wrapped in polythene, as if he or she is a character from a Mike Leigh play. (Sometimes the car seats themselves are still wrapped in polythene, and that really is weird.)

The fault, I think, lies not only in our increasing inability to distinguish between advertisement and reality, but also with the invention and increasing ubiquity of that most pernicious of gadgets, the dust-buster, that runty little vacuum cleaner that turns everyone into a *hausfrau*, our own valet service. I rang around a few professional car valeting services to ask if people had left anything bizarre or embarrassing in their cars before having them cleaned up, such as plans for a new kind of nuclear submarine or a blow-up sex doll, but all my survey told me was that people generally send their cars round to valet services only after someone has thrown up in them. And vomit, I think, lies somewhere beyond the scope of this article.)

The thing is, ever since Gottlieb Daimler first unthinkingly tossed an empty tin of macassar oil into the back of the first self-propelled motor car in Canstatt in 1895, the mess in our cars has helped us, and our passengers, know who we are. The mess personalises the car, makes it truly our own; not so much an extension of our personality, but a peek into the recesses of our souls — the parts which we never normally expose to others. It shows others what we're doing when we're not thinking, and it gives the kids innumerable things to play with when you're stuck in traffic.

Deep trouble in the flooded delta

As British aid agencies launch an appeal to relieve suffering in Bangladesh, **John Vidal** looks at how much has been lost in the country's worst flooding this century and at the huge task that lies ahead

THE BANGLADESH government official reels off precise but incomprehensible statistics: "Homeless 23,458,713. Dead people 1,040. Dead cattle 129,926. Damaged crops 668,529 hectares. Road damaged 11,237km. Bridges damaged 6,552. Schools damaged 1,052. People affected by diarrhoea 251,981. Farmland affected 800,000 hectares. Latrines damaged . . ."

He trails off. No, he can't say exactly how many latrines have been damaged or wells contaminated — or how many people have lost everything. His voice breaking under the enormity of his message, he says Bangladesh "at this moment is awful. The suffering is intolerable".

The scale of the disaster — 88,000sq km flooded — is too great to take in, and the effort and money needed to repair the damage are incalculable. But as the waters of Bangladesh's 13 big rivers and innumerable tributaries slowly subside after more than two months, the problems for one of the world's poorest countries are just beginning.

This year's floods have been the worst this century. Those of 1987 and 1988 also inundated three-quarters of the country, killing far more people. But they started receding after three weeks. This year they started early and never let up.

Every sector of the economy has been affected, says the government. Every farm, schoolchild and worker will be affected for years.

Bangladesh: the facts

- **Population:** 123 million
- **Area:** 147,570sq km
- **Population doubling date:** 2037
- **Capital:** Dhaka
- **Foreign debt:** $16,136 million
- **Life expectancy:** 56.9
- **Adult literacy:** 38%
- **GDP per capita:** $240

The scenes are pitiful. The great sheets of water are calm and the panic is now over. Massive human effort has shored up some of the most vital embankments, and the red-eyed volunteers can relax.

But there is still chaos, misery and destitution. Half of the capital, Dhaka, was still inundated last weekend and the slums are running with contaminated water. Garbage is piling up, and many thousands of people are living in flood shelters.

Fighting broke out in Dhaka last week when volunteers arrived with food at one shelter at the Central Women's University. "It's better to die in the floods than live in such a squalor," said one displaced person, Nurul Islam. "I can barely breathe."

"Miseries are growing as fast as the floodwaters have been receding," said a man taking his sick child to Dhaka's International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research. The 300-bed centre has admitted an average of 700 patients a day and has set up tents outside to cope. The patients are mostly children.

"Tackling the health problems is now the biggest post-flood worry," said Dr Sudhir Nandy in Dhaka.

A spokesman for the aid group Mauchak Bangladesh said diarrhoea, dysentery, enteric fever, hepatitis and respiratory tract and skin infections are the main problems.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says the country faces a health emergency. More than 4,000 local health teams across the country have so far prevented a major epidemic of diarrhoea, but 245,000 people are suffering from polluted water or rotten food. Ministry of health officials said dry food and drinking water were in short supply.

The country of small farmers now depends on outside help for seeds. Though flood water acts as a rich fertiliser, it is also a perennial curse. Most farmers will harvest nothing this year, and standing crops have been destroyed.

A woman wades through floodwaters in Dhaka, where hunger and disease are now rife PHOTOGRAPH: SAURABH DAS

The government believes that more than 2.5 million farmers have been hit, and it intends to give out free seeds and other necessities. It has also said it will provide food to every flood-affected family before the next harvest. But with roads destroyed, many will go without.

Agriculture is a priority, says Jahangir Alam of Mauchak. "The sowing periods for many crops are soon. Wheat is a favourite crop after a heavy flood. The usual crop rotation should still be possible. With seeds and a little loan, farmers can nearly make up for the loss. Vegetables grow well in flood-washed land. But people need seeds."

Thousands of government engineers and health staff, joined by middle-class volunteers, are still working through the night to repair the damage. Of some 150,000 wells thought to have been damaged or contaminated, about 80,000 are now usable and almost 1,500 wells have been sunk in flood shelters. But many thousands of latrines have been damaged.

Economically, the country is in chaos. Production in the huge garment and shrimp industries, vital foreign exchange earners, is thought to be 20 per cent down. The export industry has collapsed with Chittagong, the main port, blocked for weeks.

Earlier this month the government brought in troops to speed exports and avert a dockers' strike. Distribution of relief goods has been hampered because most roads and railways have been cut off.

The government said it would provide working capital to companies, particularly exporters, that had been unable to market their produce. It offered to delay repayment of loans until December.

Worst hit are the poor: rural employment has been largely wiped out; hundreds of thousands of near-destitute landless and others who live on daily wages are jobless.

The social effects are unquantifiable. The government says 525 education institutions have been damaged. But the figure excludes several thousand damaged non-government institutions. Most students in the badly affected areas have lost all their books. "It will take years to catch up," one teacher said.

But starvation has been averted. More than 350,000 tonnes of cereals have been bought by the government from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Burma and Vietnam. More than 1 million tonnes of international food aid has been pledged, and the private sector is trying to import 1.5 million tonnes of rice, according to the government.

The first consignment of 15,000 tonnes of United Nations food reached Chittagong port last weekend, joining eight other ships bringing in rice and cereals.

Repairing damage and preventing future flooding are a priority. The prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, told a rally of flood victims last week that a 50km embankment would be built around Dhaka. But she did not say where the money to build it would come from.

The WHO has appealed for $8.7 million to buy medicines and water purification tablets for up to 35 million people.

The British Red Cross, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Cafod and other charities launched an appeal in Britain last weekend. The British government has given $35 million.

Today's disasters are anything but natural

THE weather is blamed for wrecking the lives of up to 300 million flood-affected people in East Asia and the Indian subcontinent in the past two months, but free market economics that have greatly increased people's vulnerability to extreme weather may also be responsible, *writes John Vidal*.

Disaster experts, development agencies, academics and leading climatologists are beginning to support an emerging theory that the globalisation of economies may be largely responsible for much of the human misery now stalking the planet.

An area the size of Europe has been inundated in Asia, with more than 15 poor countries trying to alleviate widescale destitution and battling water-related health epidemics. Many other countries are still recovering from long droughts, forest fires and other extreme weather events in the past year.

But climatologists argue that weather is only partly to blame for the growing number of natural disasters. "There is a long-term underlying trend of climate change but no great increase in extreme weather or any greatly increased severity," says Mick Kelly of the University of East Anglia in Britain.

"There is a greatly increasing vulnerability of people following over-exploitation of resources, the clearing of forests and changing of river courses," he says.

The floods in China and India have been directly blamed on massive deforestation in the uplands, and giant dams and river control. The Chinese are now planning to replant the hillsides. Forest cover slows or prevents the run-off of water.

Economic trends are critical to understanding natural disasters, says Kelly. Austerity measures, International Monetary Fund and World Bank structural adjustment programmes and the opening of markets may be good for economies, but they are heightening inequalities, encouraging countries to sell off resources and contributing to the reduction of protection by governments.

Displacement of people because of development projects and population pressures have also contributed to more marginal people, he says.

"Five years ago 70 per cent of world disasters were related to refugees, and less than 5 per cent were natural. Almost a third of all disasters are now weather-related," says Peter Walker of the International Red Cross in Geneva. The world's leading humanitarian group is currently appealing for funds to cope with weather-related emergencies in more than 25 countries.

"Governments are increasingly unable to support public works, like embankments and flood control," he says. "Private capital has flooded into many poor countries, but it is after the quick buck. It is not interested in public works, social welfare or development projects which can increase people's capacity to cope in crises."

Many flood control systems are now old, and the cost of rebuilding or constructing embankments is mounting. At the same time governments are being told to invest more in exports and services, and there is less money available for protection.

"Economic constraints are preventing authorities investing in traditional protection services," says Walker. "They are not being encouraged to think long-term [and] are moving away from being protectors of citizens. Many traditional areas of government concern are being left to slide."

People's ability to survive natural disasters is directly related to their poverty, says Kevin Watkins, a senior policy adviser at Oxfam.

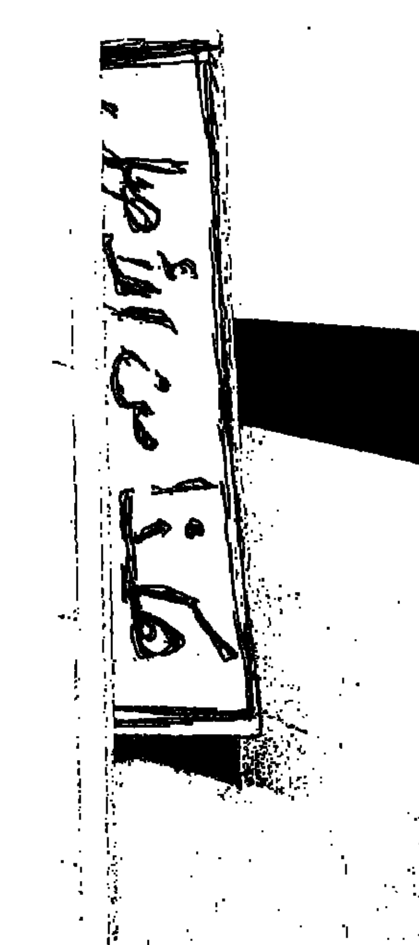
The IMF and international banks, who set strict economic policy guidelines for heavily indebted countries, are not interested in reconstruction or public works, and often do not take account of disasters, he says.

"They tightly control public expenditure, and in many countries have slashed preventive health and welfare programmes which would help people cope with disasters."

The economic policies imposed on developing countries by the IMF, he says, are widening the gap between marginal and non-marginal communities. The largest part of the income of many poor countries now goes directly to pay debts. It is money that governments could spend preventing disasters and protecting citizens.

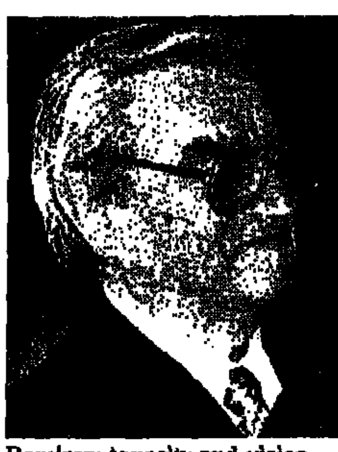
Many countries that are vulnerable to floods, droughts, cyclones and other weather extremes are having to slash preventive health programmes. When disaster or epidemics come, the problems they cause are made more serious.

Policies imposed by the IMF in the Philippines have cut public services by more than 25 per cent, and, says the government, will expose many more people to malaria and almost 2 million more people to tuberculosis.



Pragmatic soldier in the long war

Ricardo Ramírez



Ramirez: tenacity and vision

RICARDO Ramírez, who has died aged 67, was better known by his nom-de-guerre of Rolando Morán. Under this name the senior *comandante* of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) guerrilla coalition had fought the singularly brutal oligarchy of his native land for almost four decades.

The son of an army colonel, he was just 13 when a democratically inspired revolution ended the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico in 1944. In his teens, Ramirez was a leftwing student activist, a leading member of the road-workers' union (STC) and a Communist party (PGT) militant.

An enthusiastic supporter of the left-leaning government of Jacobo Arbenz (1951-54), he was forced into exile when a United States-backed coup ushered in a military dictatorship that was to last until 1986. Having sought asylum in the Argentine embassy, he found himself in the company of the young Che Guevara. "Ricardo Ramírez is perhaps one of the most capable leaders of the [communist] youth," observed Guevara. "His manner of facing problems is much less dogmatic than that of other comrades."

It was a reputation for flexibility and pragmatism that the future guerrilla leader would retain throughout his career. Much of the credit for the 1996 peace accords, signed with the elected, civilian government of Alvaro Arzú, is due to Ramírez's tenacity and vision.

In 1959, after the overthrow of the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, he was in Havana for the inauguration of the communist regime led by Fidel Castro and Guevara, and it was the Cuban example that he later sought to imitate in Guatemala.

The following year, disgruntled army officers launched an attempted coup which — though unsuccessful — ultimately led to the foundation of the country's first guerrilla organisation, the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR). Ricardo Ramírez was a founder member.

But within a few years the organisation was almost wiped out. Survivors, including Ramírez, regrouped in Cuba and examined the reasons for their failure. The outcome was a seminal 1967 document written by Ramírez which ultimately became the founding text of a new armed movement, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP).

In January 1972, 15 armed men crossed the border from Mexico into Guatemala to launch the EGP. Ramírez remained in Cuba to direct the struggle from a distance. In place of Cuban-style *foquismo*, which in essence relied on the inspirational effect of a small, armed group to spark a popular uprising, the EGP adopted a strategy of "prolonged popular war" based among the predominantly indigenous inhabitants of rural Guatemala.

With this in mind, the group set about recruiting large numbers of Mayan Indians, who make up around half the population of Guatemala, although its leadership was always dominated by *ladinos* (non-Indians). The strategy was to prove disastrous for the Indians, who bore the brunt of the scorched-earth policy adopted in response by the armed forces.

Hundreds of villages were obliterated and tens of thousands of Indians forced into exile. The EGP, which had undoubtedly succumbed to revolutionary triumphalism, inspired by the 1979 victory of the Sandinista (FSLN) guerrillas in Nicaragua and the strength of the Salvadorean FMLN, was forced to retreat along with the other armed movements.

Never again did the guerrillas pose a serious threat to the Guatemalan regime, despite the unification of the four existing groups as the URNG in 1982. But nor could the army achieve an outright victory.

In 1986 the army finally handed the reins of government — though only a small slice of the real power — to a civilian president; an event that signalled the beginning of a protracted, and frequently suspended, peace process.

It took 10 years — and four governments — for a final agreement to be signed. Only then did Ramírez return to live in Guatemala and concentrate on the creation of the URNG's own political party.

Phil Gunson

Ricardo Arnoldo Ramírez, guerrilla leader, politician, born December 29, 1930; died September 11, 1998

Race and repentance

George Wallace

GEORGE Wallace, who has died aged 79, will go down in American history as the racist bigot who probably did more than any other 20th century politician to improve the situation of his country's black citizens. That, of course, was never his intention. But the extremity of his views as governor of Alabama, the image of him blocking Alabama university's doors in June 1963 to stop two black students enrolling, and the decision of his police chief, Bull Connor, to unleash dogs on peaceful demonstrators in Birmingham shocked middle America.

Within a year Congress had passed a greatly strengthened Civil Rights Act, which was swiftly followed by a Voting Rights Act. The political landscape of the South was never the same again.

At first Wallace battled on, with considerable success. In the early Democratic primaries of the 1964 presidential campaign, he secured up to 43 per cent of the poll but, to avoid splitting the rightwing vote, withdrew when Senator Barry Goldwater won the Republican nomination. In 1968 he again ran, as a third party candidate, nearly costing Richard Nixon the White House when 10 million people voted for his American Independent Party.

In the 1972 presidential campaign, Wallace, having reverted to the Democrats, secured impressive primary victories in five states, causing much anxiety to the Democrats, and to the Nixon White House. Then, during an appearance in Maryland, Wallace was shot and crippled by Arthur Bremer, a disturbed loner. That ended his career in national politics, though he continued to be a powerful force in Alabama for another 14 years.

Wallace had been born just after the first world war in the tiny rural settlement of Clio, Alabama. At high school he turned out to be a skilful boxer, winning the state's bantamweight title at the age of 17. Then, just as he had joined the University of Alabama Law School, his father died, and Wallace was obliged to fund his five-year course through a mixture of professional boxing, working as a waiter and kitchen hand, and driving a taxi.

He graduated in 1942 but, with the United States then plunged into the second world war, he joined the US Army Air Force, and flew nine bombing sorties over Japan as a flight engineer in 1945. He came home in 1946 to work as one of the state's assistant attorneys general, a fairly low rung on the legal ladder.

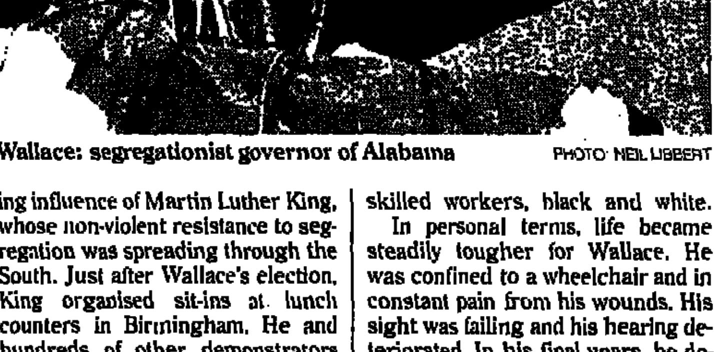
His contacts in this position soon ignited an interest in local politics and, in 1947, he was elected to the state legislature, rapidly emerging as an active and effective operator.

In 1953 he returned to the law, winning election as a state district judge. By this time Wallace had also become a leading figure in the local Democratic party. He was close to the larger-than-life governor, Jim Folson, and relied on that connection to sustain his own gubernatorial bid in 1958 — state law prevented the governor succeeding himself.

Wallace came second in the primary. He had been offered formal support by the Ku Klux Klan, which he had rejected. As a result he was endorsed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the run-off against the other leading contender. His opponent, to whom the KKK had shifted its allegiance, won by a narrow margin after a blatantly racist campaign.

Wallace told friends he had lost because he had been "out-segged", and vowed it would never happen again. In 1962 he launched a ferocious segregationist campaign and was elected by the largest vote ever achieved by an Alabama governor.

The white voters who backed him were plainly fearful of the increasing influence of Martin Luther King, whose non-violent resistance to segregation was spreading through the South. Just after Wallace's election, King organised sit-ins at lunch counters in Birmingham. He and hundreds of other demonstrators came under assault by the police and were thrown in jail. In response, King organised the March on Washington, for ever famous for his "I have a dream" address.



Wallace: segregationist governor of Alabama PHOTO: NEIL LIBBERT

In 1965, as his governorship neared its end, Wallace tried to force a constitutional amendment through to allow him to succeed himself. It failed, and he then persuaded his wife, Lurleen, to run for the office. She won the 1966 election but died of cancer two years later.

In 1970 Wallace was again eligible to run and produced another ferociously racist campaign, which returned him to the governor's mansion. Two years previously the state legislature had amended the constitution to allow a governor two successive terms so, in spite of his paralysis from the assassination attempt, he was easily re-elected in 1974. But he was out of tune with the times. The continued resistance to the civil rights movement in the state saw a rapid emigration of skilled workers, black and white.

In personal terms, life became steadily tougher for Wallace. He was confined to a wheelchair and in constant pain from his wounds. His sight was failing and his hearing deteriorated. In his final years, he developed Parkinson's disease.

But he underwent a remarkable conversion. One Sunday morning in 1979 the black congregation of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery was startled to see an elderly white man being wheeled down the aisle by his black assistant. Governor Wallace had come to say sorry. "I've learned what suffering means," he said. "I can only ask your forgiveness."

And the black electorate did forgive him. When Wallace ran for his final term as governor in 1982, he secured 90 per cent of the black vote. But the traditional hold of the Democrats had been weakened, and Wallace retired in 1986 to watch Republicans gradually taking over his state.

Harold Jackson

George Corley Wallace, politician, born August 25, 1919; died September 13, 1998

A passion for science

Anthony Tucker

ANTHONY TUCKER, who has died aged 74, was a newspaperman who became a legend even before he was well known. Phil to friends in the office, Tony to friends outside and Anthony to his readers, he was the Guardian's science correspondent from 1964 and the days of the Apollo programme to 1988 and the aftermath of Chernobyl.

But his lifelong passion for science never got in the way of a profound suspicion of powerful establishments. For decades he argued for investment in sustainable energy technologies. He was also profoundly concerned about what powerful nations should be doing for the developing world. He could be hugely and enjoyably critical of complacency in the nuclear industry: time was to prove him right. But he had little formal training in science.

Anthony Tucker was born in Urmston, near Manchester. Educated at Stretford Grammar School, he began to study aeronautical engineering at Queens College in Belfast early in the second world war. He then joined the Royal Air Force, and flew Hurricanes and Spitfires in North Africa and Europe.

He graduated in fine art from Manchester College of Art and then walked into legend by arriving in the old Manchester Guardian offices in Cross Street early in 1952 to paint a very large mural on the canteen wall. High on the scaffold he was joined by the assistant editor John Anderson, who asked if he knew anyone who could write art notices. Tucker suggested himself. Thus did he stay on, drawing maps for the weather pages, writing Miscellany, the diary column, editing pictures. By 1957 he was officially a subeditor.

He was one of the founder members of the Guardian's features department, which in the course of the next decade launched a revolution in the way serious newspapers were to address the issues of the day. He introduced dramatic changes into the design of arts and features pages in the early 1960s, and became one of the most respected newspaper art critics of the time.

When the Guardian's then science correspondent, John Maddox, became editor of Nature, Anthony Tucker took over science, covering the landing on the Moon, the emerging alarms over environmental pollution, and what above all he saw as the abuse of science. In 1967 he was already campaigning for lead-free petrol; 14 years later he was highlighting the destruction of the rain forests. He was one of the first journalists, in the mid-1980s, to become aware of the seriousness of the coming BSE crisis.

He retired in 1988 and after a sudden heart attack at his St Albans home, underwent bypass surgery at the National Heart Hospital in Chelsea. But nothing dampened his enthusiasm for life, his sense of comedy or his passion for science. He is survived by his wife, his son and two daughters.

Tim Radford

Philip Anthony Tucker, journalist, born June 1, 1924; died September 15, 1998

Row over bird's rise from ashes

Cathie Bell in Wellington on attempts to resurrect New Zealand's moa

A PROJECT trying to revive an extinct 400kg bird has come to a halt in New Zealand because Maori tribes and researchers are at odds over who owns the bird's DNA.

New Zealand's moa, which resembled an ostrich and stood about 2m tall, was hunted to extinction by Maori tribes about 300 years ago.

After initial work by a Japanese scientist, Yasuyuki Shirota, a joint project was started by scientists at New Zealand's Otago university to isolate moa genes and clone them with ostrich or emu genes to produce large moa-type birds.

Professor Diana Hill, head of molecular biology at Otago university's biochemistry department, said that this "opened up interesting possibilities for breeders of ostriches and for science".

She and her colleagues were confident that the extinct birds could be brought back to life, but said the cost could run to nearly $50 million.

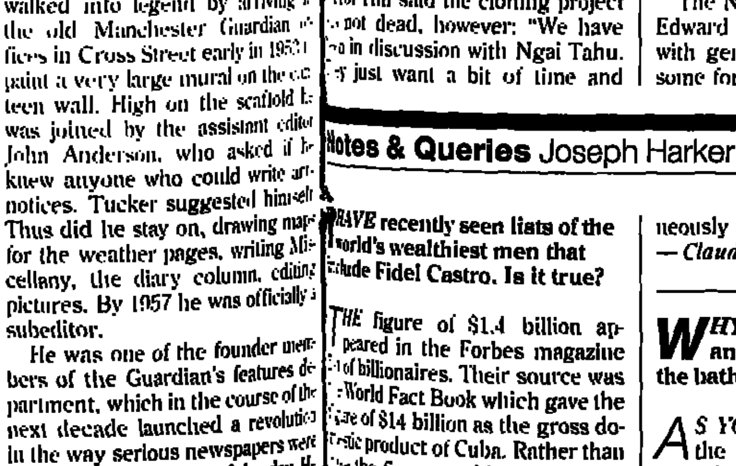
The project is now in abeyance until the ownership of the moa genes is sorted out with the Ngai Tahu Maoris of the South Island. It is not expected to be resolved for at least 18 months, until after a tribunal hearing rules on a claim by Maori tribes for the ownership of all New Zealand flora and fauna.

Prof Hill said the cloning project is not dead, however: "We have been in discussion with Ngai Tahu. They just want a bit of time and space to think things over. It caught them on the hop."

The Ngai Tahu deputy chairman, Edward Ellison, said that playing with genes and trying to recreate some form of extinct species would be a sensitive matter for Maoris. "Anything indigenous is regarded as *taonga* [treasured possessions]" by the indigenous people. "It's part of the family that makes up our whole environment."

The moa weighed in at 400kg before hunting killed it off

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker



I HAVE recently seen lists of the world's wealthiest men that include Fidel Castro. Is it true?

THE figure of $1.4 billion appeared in the Forbes magazine list of billionaires. Their source was the World Fact Book which gave the figure of $14 billion as the gross domestic product of Cuba. Rather than base the figure on his property or personal holdings, Forbes made an editorial decision that as president of Cuba, Castro controls at least 10 per cent of the Cuban economy, thus conferring on him billionaire status. However, he is still theoretically an elected public official, albeit without opposition, and therefore as an individual is not entitled to a stake in any state assets in the unlikely event of his resignation or secession. — *Jonathan Lemon, San Francisco, USA*

IS IT really possible to break a wine glass by singing at a particular pitch and volume?

BRUCE COLLINS alleges that the human voice is insufficiently powerful to break a glass (September 13). If so, he might care to account for what happened when my wife and I had a row one evening. Our voices rose higher and higher, and suddenly a goblet on the dining table shattered. — *Ron ...ers, Barnet, Hertfordshire*

I ACHIEVED this feat when, as a teenager, I was singing the title song from the film Annie. When I hit the top note, a large wine glass shattered. It happened spontaneously and was not thrown at me. — *Claudia Freeman, Glasgow*

WHY is it only the finger tips and toes that go wrinkly in the bath?

AS YOUR skin absorbs water in the bath, it expands in size, most dramatically at the extremities where it appears there is more skin than necessary. — *Ken Frank, Izmir, Turkey*

WHAT WAS the longest single construction project carried through?

THE longest construction project in distance is the Trans-Siberian Railway, running 9,335km from Moscow to Vladivostok. Double track, largely electrified, has replaced the original single track line built between 1891 and 1905. The complete journey with 100 stops takes nine days.

The longest in continual daily use is probably the Pantheon in Rome, built as a temple in 27BC and rebuilt about 118AD under Emperor Hadrian. In 609AD it became the Church of Sta Maria Rotunda. The building is round, not the saint. — *E S Webber, Kewarra Beach, Queensland, Australia*

IS THERE any scientific basis for regarding some colours as harmonising with each other and some as clashing?

ALTHOUGH suitable for Irish Queens, the juxtaposition of red and green causes difficulties for the human eye. The eye brings light rays to a focus on the back of the eye (the retina) but the focusing mechanism causes red light to fall slightly in front of the retina and green light to fall slightly behind. This means the eye cannot simultaneously focus on red and green — resulting in general ocular discomfort when red and green are together. This fact is exploited in some eyesight tests and 3-D pictures. — *Mark Mon-Williams, University of St Andrews, Scotland*

Any answers?

I BELIEVE my father grew tobacco back home in Suffolk after the war. Would it have been successful? Was it legal? — *M Josling, Claxton, Norfolk*

I HAVE heard the Welsh will be the only nation to end the millennium with the same wording on their flag — Y Ddraig Goch (The Red Dragon) — with which they started. Is this true? — *Huw Roberts, Caerdydd*

WHY do so many team sports — cricket, hockey, soccer, etc — have the peculiarity of 11 players on a team? — *John Dean, Headington, Oxford*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Letter from Taiwan Mark Williams

The living dead

THE first thing that strikes a foreigner arriving in Taiwan at the beginning of autumn is the braziers on pavements, squeezed between the shop fronts and phalanxes of closely parked scooters, lined up like dominoes ready to fall.

The seventh lunar month is the Ghost Month, when dead relatives are granted time off from the underworld and wander through the world of the living.

Ancestors are treated like sullen children, propitiated with offerings lest they turn malevolent. They reside on the other side of death with power to bestow blessings or misfortunes on their descendants but reliant on the living for the basic necessities of their existence, which include food, money and toiletries. The braziers are for the burning of spirit money, wads of silver and gold notes, and they are attentively fed by shop assistants in smart, lurid uniforms.

Taiwan's smoke-wrapped shop doors, sliding open automatically to allow customers in and out, are an image of how traditional beliefs remain a core element of this modern society. Chinese histories tell us that Cai Lun, who was attached to the Imperial Court, invented paper in 105AD. It didn't catch on, because bamboo strips were well established as a writing material, and Cai soon amassed a useless paper surplus.

Later, Cai became ill and, in a desperate attempt to save his life, his wife torched some of his new invention in the hope that it might appease the gods. The spirits relented, the King of Hell himself was moved to release him, and once word spread of paper's propitious qualities the spirit money industry was born.

I spent a week recently on the west coast of Taiwan, in an area where oysters are cultivated, hung on strings from racks standing in the clay-filled sea water. The night I arrived I lay down under the stars. Within minutes I was approached by three men, swinging the heavy silhouettes of guns and leading a black spectre of an alsatian. The beaches of the Taiwan Strait, 160km from mainland China's Fujian province, are patrolled, I discovered as they questioned me, to guard against anyone landing. The Taiwanese government, it seems, is happy to assert dominion over the people of China, as long as their claim is not realised.

The status of Taiwan remains in limbo, a de facto independence, which the government will not recognise, both for fear of the wrath it would draw from its counterpart in Beijing and because of the sentiment of a large proportion of the population that they are Chinese foremost, Taiwanese second. Instead, a relationship of unofficial ties has been nurtured, with great benefit to both sides as vast quantities of Taiwanese dollars have been invested in the People's Republic, where manufacturing costs are significantly lower than in Taiwan.

Such pragmatism has long been a feature of the Chinese way of doing things. Less than 10 years ago, the two sides were still firing propaganda-filled metal canisters at each other across the narrow stretch of water that separates Fujian from the Taiwanese outpost on the island of Jinmen. To avoid causing injury they limited their bombardments to alternate days.

THE village where I stayed happened to be celebrating the 8,000th birthday of its temple's patron goddess. There were banquets in every house, with platters of eels, lobsters and fish, the streets swarming with people: stalls bedecked with local delicacies and plastic swords that glowed in the dark, penny slot machines, puppet shows and Chinese operas performed from the backs of lorries, all drowned in the cacophony of three kung fu movies broadcast simultaneously on huge screens. Lines of exuberant villagers filed into the temple to pay their respects to the birthday goddess.

It surprised me to see my young friends joining in the procession before the golden statue since they have often claimed that the amalgam of Taoism and Buddhism that is followed by older generations is as alien to their lives as it is to mine. Simply copy what the person in front of you does, that's all we do, they said, it keeps our parents happy.

Inside, the temple was laden with bottles, apples, bags of assorted nuts. And what of the beer and roast ducks when all the spirit money has been burned, I asked a girl in a smart, lurid uniform. "Ah," she said with a smile, "that'll be dinner."

A Country Diary

Jacqueline Karp Gendre

CORSICA: Around Porto Vecchio, on the southeast coast of Corsica, spreads the largest cork oak forest on the island. The gnarled trunks tell at which stage of cultivation they are. Before the first cutting, at 25 years old, the bark is grey and fissured. Then, the first "male" bark is removed, leaving the trees with deep tan stockings. The word for this technique is *démascler*, a Provençal word meaning "to emasculate". Slowly black "female" bark regrows. This is more highly prized and is collected every 10 years or so and exported across the windy straits to Sardinia to be processed.

Cork oaks are sturdy and evergreen, but by the end of four months without rain, few flowers have resisted the heat except for the bushes of white, crushed raspberry pink and deep crimson oleanders in every garden. More colour is added by the prickly pears, now ripening from green through gold to purple.

High above Porto Vecchio, among the strange granite formations and cool pine forests of the Ospedale, the occasional wild cyclamen peeps a bowed head out of the parched grass. Speckled orange and brown fritillaries and clouds of blue butterflies suck the last moisture out of the thistles' stamens. A few heifers hiding from the heat, their faces peeping above the high, thick ferns, are the only form of large animal life to be seen. Still further up, on the windswept pastures of Vacca Morta, a few tiny pale autumn crocuses blow to and fro, miraculously resisting the gusting wind that forces us back into the shelter of the forest.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY September 27 1998

Soap gets in the eyes

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

ACCORDING to The Truth About Soaps, *Emmerdale* is doomed. By the terms of its lease, the village, which is a film set built on a greenfield site, is due to be bulldozed in 2007.

Emmerdale is given to sudden heart-starting jolts, intended to defibrillate the ratings — once a jumbo jet fell on the village — but this sounds better than Pompeii.

Perhaps a meteor will score a direct hit on The Woolpack. Or perhaps a yawning void will open up in Boycott's Bottom, swallowing Lady Tara and her tiara, Kim and her seventh husband, Zoë the lesbian vet, Old Seth and his sheepdog, Satan, the Rev Goodbody and the whole malodorous Dingle clan. Mandy Dingle, game girl, will probably stick a bit in the yawning void but finally she too will vanish with a faint cry of "Ecky thump!"

How like the fate of Belper. As Lord George Brown once said with relish, "Belper's been wiped off the electoral map and serves the buggers right!" (George had lost his Belper seat some time before, but these things rankle.)

In an Emmerdale special last week, Kim and Steve stole a stud stallion and sold it for £200,000, which sounds a good price for a hot horse. Driving home, Steve knocked down Kathy, thus setting in motion the usual, well-loved dialogue. "Hang on, she's alive! Just!" . . . "All we can do is wait . . . " "It's touch and go. She's on a life support system . . ." "We need to relieve the pressure on the brain!"

To relieve the pressure on your brain, turn to Lady Tara, who is sharing a last night of passion with Biff, her chauffeur, before she marries Lord Michael. At the wedding Lady Tara is faced with the excruciating choice, sex or three weeks in the Seychelles. Oh go on, guess.

I catch Emmerdale occasionally, like a cold. Jamie Richards in *The Truth About Soaps* (ITV) would have no patience with that attitude. Jamie is a true believer.

He said: "I watch all the soaps. I catalogue all the details that happen in each episode and keep files on all the actors and actresses. I manage to keep track of all the soaps by using six videos and five tellys. It was a bit of a nightmare with the World Cup, episodes were all over the place. They should not do this to our soaps." This is quite true. He is a pale, wispy lad, like a seedling grown without light, but happy with it. There are soap stars on his ceiling.

One day his records will be invaluable. I don't know how. Somehow. For instance, I was watching *The Reunion* (Channel 5), a continuation of the defunct soap, Dynasty, for an hour and 40 minutes before I realised with goosepimpling horror that I'd seen it before.

It all came flooding back when the evil doctor with the goatee told Jeremy, who was plotting to take over the world (it is my considered view someone called Jeremy can't take over the world) why Krystle was looking unusually vacant. "She has been scientifically triggered to kill Blake Carrington the next time they make love."

Now, Jamie could have told me it had been shown before.

For the sort of soap which really washes whiter I commend *Coronation Street* (ITV) to you. Alec, the landlord of the Rovers, and Rita, once known as the Weatherfield nightingale, have come to a certain understanding. Alec has been secretly knocking a door in the wall between their flats. Or as secretly as you can knock a hole in a load-bearing wall. Tragically, he was buried alive. This little contretemps led to an excellent exchange at the bar of the Rovers.

Martin (a nurse): "No repercussions then? No strained ligaments, pulled muscles? I've done a course in medical massage, you know."

Fred (fortissimo): " 'AVE YOU BIN UP TO SUMMAT I KNOW NOWT ABOUT?"

Martin: "I've heard of going through fire and water before but never a brick wall."

Fred: "WILL ONE OF YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?"

Alec (writhing): "I had a little accident. A brick wall fell on me."

Fred: "WHY DID IT DO THAT?"

Martin: "It were being attacked with a sledgehammer."

All this time Rita had been staring into her gin as if she were reading tea leaves. Finally she said frostily, "We're having a door fitted between the two flats. For convenience."

Fred: "CONVENIENCE! I'VE NEVER 'EARD IT CALLED THAT BEFORE."

Vera glared at the wretched Alec. "Look at 'im, entertaining 'is friends." Among whom I count myself one.



Derek Jacobi as Francis Bacon and Daniel Craig as his working-class lover in John Maybury's biopic

The Devil in Mr Bacon

CINEMA
Richard Williams

I CAME out of John Maybury's Love Is The Devil, which is rather coyly subtitled "Study for a portrait of Francis Bacon", feeling I'd never seen a film that makes such direct and illuminating connection with the eye of an artist. On the other hand, I didn't know Francis Bacon, so I can't tell whether the story Maybury tells us is true, in the literal sense. That bothers me. But if you want a brilliantly sustained imagining of how, according to some of the best available evidence, Bacon saw his world, and how he rendered that vision on to canvas, then Love Is The Devil is a very remarkable film indeed.

Perhaps the best piece of luck granted to Maybury during his preparation for the film, apart from Derek Jacobi's agreement to impersonate the painter, was the refusal of Bacon's executors to permit the use of the original artworks. Thrown back largely on his own resources, Maybury was forced to devise other means of illustrating the way Bacon mediated the evidence of his own eyes. The result is the most original and stimulating aspect of the film, carrying it far beyond the limitations of the conventional biopic.

Wisely, the film concentrates on a single extended episode: the period defined by Bacon's love affair with George Dyer, a minor East End underworld figure. The relationship began in 1964, when Bacon discovered Dyer trying to burgle his studio, and ended with Dyer's suicide in a Paris hotel in 1971, when Bacon was attending the opening of a major exhibition of his work at the Grand Palais, a few hundred metres away.

Right from the beginning we are invited to see the world through Baconian eyes. Faces are sloped and slurred through the curve of wine glasses, sliced and mirrored on a knife-blade, or multiplied in a bathroom triple-mirror, suggesting the origin of the famous triptychs. The prevailing palette — sludgy green, screaming orange, bleeding carmine, lots of solid black — is familiar.

Those who knew Bacon seem unanimous in their approval of Jacobi's performance, in which affection, generosity, indifference and cruelty are juggled and nuanced to perfection. "Welcome to the concentration of camp," someone says when Dyer is introduced to the denizens of the Colony Room, and there are lots of good camp cracks ("Who's Arthur and who's Martha?" the photographer John Deakin inquires, surveying the new couple), but Jacobi never lets Bacon's own lightness of manner descend into caricature. His extended toilette — brushing his teeth with Vim, followed by the application of boot polish to hair, of mascara, powder and lipstick — is a miniature masterpiece in an exceptional film.

Men With Guns? What a lovely ironic title for a film by John Sayles. No living American director works at a greater distance from the sensibility it suggests. Sayles may make hard-headed movies, but he doesn't do hardware.

There are, in fact, a few guns in his new Spanish-language film, which is set in a nameless Central American country where government soldiers are trying to flush revolutionary guerrillas out of the countryside, using the kind of "pacification" techniques familiar to anyone of Sayles's generation from newsreel films of Vietnam.

Through this wild and inhospitable scenery travels Fuentes (Federico Luppi), an ageing big-city doctor who once trained medical students to go out in the countryside and work among the peasantry. Now, alerted by rumours that the scheme may have foundered, Fuentes sets off to discover the truth.

On his journey through the interior Fuentes accumulates a gang of motley companions while being serially relieved of his camera, his clothes, even the wheels of his Jeep.

"This," someone says, "is where rumours come to die," and Sayles creates an ambiance of remoteness and dislocation. It may not be Sayles's most audience-friendly film, but it is certainly a worthwhile addition to a career that owes nothing to Hollywood's imperatives.

Love songs from beyond the grave

OPERA
Andrew Clements

AFTER world music, now we have world opera. Peony Pavilion, the latest attraction in the London Barbican's International Theatre Season, has a score by Tan Dun, an English translation by Cyril Birch and a staging by Peter Sellars, and though it is based upon the 16th century Ming dynasty play by Tang Xianzu, it gains its power from the way in which music, text and action shuttle backwards and forwards between East and West, combining actors and singers from both performing traditions.

It is too long, but moments of real theatrical intensity are the reward for sitting through three-and-a-half hours, and there has been nothing quite like it before.

The story is relatively simple. A rich, bored girl dreams of seeing the lover she has never met, a poor student from the south of the country, but pines away before he arrives. Three years later the youth happens upon her grave at the Peony Pavilion, where the girl's ghost appears and makes love to him. After he has proposed marriage, he discovers she is a ghost, but he exhumes her body and restores her to life so they can be united at last.

Sellars and his company of singers and actors draw out this tale in several strands. For the first part, leading up to the girl's death, Tan Dun's score is a recreation of traditional music. The sung roles, delivered in the style of Kun opera with the compelling Hua Wenyi as the girl, are also doubled by actors (Lauren Tom and Joel de la Fuente) speaking Birch's English text.

For the second, the layers unravel still further. The score is now Tan's own music, and a third pair of lovers is portrayed by Western-style opera singers (soprano Ying Huang and tenor Lin Qiang Xu), so that the action unfolds in triplicate.

The real compelling interest lies in this second part. Sellars generates the drama by feeding off the interplay between the three narrative layers, and Tan's score provides a dynamic all its own. Some moments are pure kitsch, but there are passages of real, fizzling confrontation, too, rough-edged collisions between trad and tech, Chinese instruments and synthesised sounds, monks' chanting and obsessive rhythms, and when it all comes together the result is mightily effective.

As always with Sellars, there's the suspicion he has loaded too much baggage onto a slender frame. But in the end the means are justified: if this is what it takes to produce these thunderclaps of heart-stopping, unclassifiable power, we should take it on trust. Nobody except Sellars would produce this unique fusion and nobody else would bring it off so intensely.

Taking God into his own hands

ART
Adrian Searle

I WALKED through this exhibition with a grin on my face. Sometimes I guffawed out loud. Astonishing, startling, hilarious — the Royal Academy's Picasso: Painter And Sculptor In Clay is all this and more. It is uneven, at times repetitive, but full of shocks and surprises none the less. The cumulative effect is exhilarating, no matter that there are too many faces and too many bullfights. This is the largest exhibition of Picasso's work in ceramics ever held, and it will fill the main salons of the Academy until December 16.

There are more than 200 unique works, beautifully arranged (the display cabinets and plinths, in plain grey concrete and Perspex, were designed by Sophie Hicks of SH Architects), and this is a mere fragment of Picasso's output in the medium. One group alone, of meat plates reworked with images, runs to almost 1,000 individual pieces.

He treated each of these dishes as a sketchbook page and he did the same with tiles, with plaques, with chestnut roasters, casseroles, pitchers, vases, pots. He took pots fresh from the wheel and plates from the mould and re-formed and deformed them. He had a potter throw particular shapes for him (he never learned, nor ever needed to learn, to throw a pot himself), or took standard forms from the potter's repertoire, and added to them or amalgamated two or more different pre-existent forms. He took the pots and vases and jugs and plates and dishes, the tableware and ovenware, and treated it all as base material, working with whatever the given forms suggested to him and pushing further.

The entire careers of lesser artists are pre-empted and overshadowed in a single work, a throwaway gesture. At his best, Picasso makes most people's art seem merely unnecessary. He drew and painted in matt opaque slips and unpredictable, translucent oxide glazes. He sculpted, embossed, scored, decorated, drew. He painted bodies on jugs, and turned jugs into bodies. He turned women into vases, vases into women. With a few strokes of yellow, a tall pot in suntan-coloured clay becomes a woman in a yellow bikini.

Dissent still lingers about Picasso's output as a ceramicist. There is a sense that his ceramics are almost too decorative, too charming, that they constitute a tourist's gallery of souvenirs. It isn't just the matter of how prolific he was (more than 1,000 pieces in one year). It's the medium itself: decorated pots and plates aren't quite serious, are they?

According to Norman Rosenthal, exhibition secretary at the Academy, there has been resistance to the very idea of this show. David Sylvester rumbled against it (but then his spats with Rosenthal are legendary: "Nothing Norman does ever fails to annoy me," he said on TV once). Others raised their eyebrows — the ceramics? This is Picasso for kids, Picasso retreating into play in the post-war years. Picasso going into production and turning himself into kitsch, then.

During the 1950s, Picasso's ceramics did indeed become the model, the exemplar, for evening-class ceramicists, my own father — a gifted amateur — among them. All this was owed to Picasso, who, since 1946, had been turning the small Madoura pottery business in the small town of Vallauris, in the Côte d'Azur, upside down. That the recent work of an artist so radical, so difficult as Picasso could gain such currency says something about the accessibility of much of his work in ceramics. Is there anything wrong with being accessible, pleasurable, so spontaneous, so joyful?

As early as 1906 he had modelled a palm-sized head of a man while in the village of Gósol, high in the Catalan Pyrenees, and that same year he painted images of a jug and a nude, in gouache, on a large earthenware casserole. But it was the decade in Vallauris, from 1947 to 1957, that the majority of Picasso's work in clay was produced, although he continued to work in the medium till 1969.

His work in clay is about pleasure. It is sly and spry, witty, sexy and deceptively profound. This show is provocative, insanely pleasurable, funny and alarming. Picasso playing God, right before our eyes. What more could one want?

Picasso's Head, one of 200 works in clay in an exhilarating show

Shooting the natives in the name of art

PHOTOGRAPHY
Richard Gott

THE organisers of the London Barbican Art Gallery's exhibition Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography (until January 10) clearly suffered from a failure of nerve. They admit to walking on eggshells, and agree that they were learning as they went along. The excuse for the show is the Corporation of London's ownership of a set of Edward Curtis's famous crowd-pleasing turn-of-the-century photographs of Native Americans. The curators dreamed up the reasonable idea of discovering how later generations of photographers, especially Native Americans ones, have made use of that work.

They wanted to get away from the John Wayne idea of "cowboys and Indians", yet they have not quite been able to summon up the courage to use words such as "genocide" or "extermination". They should have been braver, for the destruction of indigenous peoples in the recent past, and the survival of their damaged cultural legacy, is already one of the emerging themes that seems to dominate the 21st century.

A curator told me that they had tried "to maintain a balance" between the conflicting demands of historical revelation and aesthetics. Their scales seem to have come down more heavily on the side of the history of photography than on the history of the Native Americans. Most of the 19th century photographs have been mounted in elegant white frames, inviting us to view them as works of art.



A Nuhlimkilaku mask from the Native Nations exhibition

Yet several of the photographers accompanied military expeditions, and their photographs were used by the army to familiarise themselves with the cultures they were about to destroy. The Barbican curators often seem to be aestheticising tragedy, which, as their exemplary presentation of the Edward Curtis photographs indicates, they know you are not supposed to do.

Yet, with a little hard work, some fascinating stories can be found. Shakpe, or Little Six, was a Lakota delegate to a Washington conference in 1858 and is shown here in a photograph as a distinguished statesman. Four years later, a second photograph shows a grimly-pensive Little Six awaiting execution for his part in the Great Sioux Revolt of 1862.

A third image is given a contemporary and subversively ironic rendering by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, an artist from Arizona. She shows the same photograph of Little Six, blown up, with added text: "Damn, I keep dreaming of three cherries!" Tsinhnahjinnie's contributions give real meaning and interest to this show. One shows an impressive red desert cliff in evening light, looking as though it might have escaped from a Marlboro advertisement. "This is not a commercial," booms the text, "this is my homeland." Her other work has a political content of a similar octane, and she also works with short, sharp, video commercials with a highly developed sense of humour. Larry McNeil is another artist working with irony. One of his photographs has five grey skulls on a black background, with "Home Sweet Home" superimposed in folksy lettering.

"Kincolith," announces the accompanying text, "is the name of our village." It means "place on the beach where our enemy skulls are planted". Underneath the skulls is an additional message: "It helped us live in peace and an added bonus was that we didn't have many Jehovah's Witness types ringing our doorbells."

As in Australia, Native American children were often taken from their parents and placed in boarding schools to "civilise" them. Some of the 19th century photographs show the children of captured Indians who had been imprisoned at Fort Marion in Florida. The prison-fort, originally built by the Spanish, was named to commemorate General Francis Marion, who fought against the Cherokee in 1759. His name was given in 1907 to Marion Michael Morrison, later to be the Hollywood scourge of Indians, and better known as John Wayne. Some traditions take a long time to die.

Milking the meltdown for belly laughs

THEATRE
Lyn Gardner

WITH many people predicting global meltdown as a result of the millennium bug, Michael Frayn's cautionary tales Alarms And Excursions, about gizmos, gadgets and humans on the blink could hardly be more timely. Or funnier.

Taking the form of eight playlets, the evening is sub-titled More Plays Than One, and even if this collection ends up being something substantially less than his last play there is entertainment enough to be had from Michael Blakemore's glossily cast and staged production at the Gilded Theatre in London.

In Alarms, Felicity Kendal and Nicky Henson invite the luckless Josie Lawrence and Robert Bathurst to a dinner party that soon shows all the hallmarks of a classic farce: the protagonists are having the worst day of their lives. Frayn ups the stakes by multiplying the situation by four and throws in defective smoke alarms, kitchen timers, internal phone systems and corkscrews for good measure and good laughter.

In the final sketch, Immobiles, which stars an answering machine, a defective relationship is shown up for what it is by a series of misunderstandings and missed appointments charted in hilarious and gruesome detail via public call boxes and the answering machine, which finally explodes in protest.

In between are sandwiched a number of extended observations on the nature of communication, some trite, as in the airline safety spoof Look Away Now, and some wittily deceptive: in Toasters a group of middle managers listen to their chairman's pep talk while burdened by briefcases, wine glasses, plates, documents and a desperate desire to do the right thing.

Of course this evening is really less about the unreliability of machines than that of people, particularly when they insist on behaving like machines.

But even when it hints at the serious, the tone of the evening is relentlessly lightweight, and although Frayn frequently stretches his scenarios to the limit there is very little here to stretch the audience beyond the warm belly laughs of rueful recognition.

The cast play with great gusto — Kendal turning in an unexpected Mrs Thatcher parody as a politician with the hairdo and ferocity of a rabid badger whose planned speech on regionalisation in the watercress industry is doomed by a disgruntled autocue operator.

But the pieces are so brief and so reliant on the theatre of gesture that you end up admiring the technical expertise of these actors rather than their performances.

While we're on the subject of technical expertise, John A Leonard's soundscape of chinks, buzzes, bells and alarms deserves an award all of its own.

Genres go to war

Sean O'Brien

Charlotte Gray
by Sebastian Faulks
Hutchinson 394pp £16.99

WITH Charlotte Gray, Sebastian Faulks completes a trilogy begun with the slim inter-war romance The Girl At The Lion d'Or and substantiated by the large and massively popular Great War novel Birdsong. The new novel takes us to the second world war, to Vichy France, the various fractious resistance groupings and the machinations of the British intelligence services. Thus there is a slightly more explicit political dimension here than in the earlier books, but like its predecessors Charlotte Gray is also a love story.

As readers familiar with Faulks's work will know, he construes love as a form of heroism: so, here, the ostensibly prim young Scotswoman Charlotte is parachuted into France, where as well as performing her duties she searches for her missing lover, an English pilot. Love, the suggestion goes, must be stronger than likely death, even as Charlotte's mind's-eye picture of the young man fades and another passion offers itself. Her travels as a courier bring her into increasingly intimate contact with the resistance leader Julien Levade. Virtue, it seems, will have to make do with compromise.

The greatest strength of Faulks's writing lies in description and evocation. His real and imagined French towns — Amiens, Janvilliers, Lavaurette — exert a dank, melancholy fascination. Their secrecy, tedium and inarticulate frustration seem almost paradisally complete. We know what people eat and what they smell like; their blend of indifference and despair at the succession of failed inter-war governments; the closeness to the surface of their anti-Semitism; and we sense the swallowed misery of the millions of war-bereaved.

Faulks also brings greater conviction to some of the French characters than to the British. Varieties of French collaboration with the Germans are the most interesting things in the book. Levade slowly shames the local gendarme into admitting his part in the deportation of a Jewish couple. Pichon, an official of Laval's government, justifies the intended arrest of Levade's father for his Jewish ancestry in a manner both farcical and chilling. The real life of Charlotte Gray is in these cameos.

For most of the book, Levade successfully conceals two Jewish children from discovery and deportation. When the narrative shifts to the holding camp for Jewish deportees on the outskirts of Paris, the atmosphere of terror suggests we have entered a novel of an entirely different order. Yet in the depiction of Levade's father, a painter who has lost his gift, Faulks risks sacrificing the book's best imaginings for some rather wooden reflections on art. It comes to seem that he is unwittingly writing two books — one serious, the other less so.

While Faulks sees clearly the faults of French society, he also seeks to suggest that his France reveals at least the memory of a natural and successful congruence between culture and landscape. Presented rather than argued, this oddly Lawrentian touch is echoed elsewhere in some rather religiose passages in Birdsong. Faulks's achievement in that novel — which offsets doubts about his handling of characters, such as the working-class tunneller Jack Firebrace — is to write about conflict on the Western Front in such a way as to shock and re-awaken even those who have studied the conflict exhaustively, at the same time as seizing the interest of the rather larger number whose reading of Wilfred Owen at school remains among their most powerful literary and moral experiences.

In Charlotte Gray, however, the epic stage of the battlefield is removed, and with it a certain moral simplicity: the new war is in a sense conducted privately. This exposes a limitation. Charlotte, for all Faulks's meticulous concern with detail, is an idea waiting to be impersonated by Virginia McKenna or Muriel Pavlow. Her Scottishness, unlike the surrounding Frenchness, is a thin, pageant-Prod business. The sense of inauthenticity extends to the English characters, too. Her lover is a damaged Chap, scared of commitment. The men from Intelligence are ciphers for realpolitik, while Charlotte's flatmates come shrieking in from Costume Drama, and in their presence the novel crosses over into genre fiction without the book acquiring the thriller writer's virtues of pace and tension.

It is hard to account for the sense of aesthetic dissonance created by the novel as a whole: on the one hand, seriousness, the gradually awakening horror at the Holocaust; on the other, something close to kitsch — an English period piece with everything in place except the life for which Faulks has so carefully set the scene. It may perhaps be the obligations of the trilogy that undermine Faulks's success here: there are threads to be followed. Charlotte is the daughter of Captain Gray, the tight-arsed sardonic psychiatrist from Birdsong. Something unspecified in her childhood — it sounds like a sexual assault but seems not to be — has broken their relationship.

Charlotte's own odyssey by bicycle and train must somehow prepare her for reconciliation. But all this seems like a thematic rather than a genuinely imaginative necessity. The fact that Faulks wants to write as an advocate of love, decency, courage and persistence (an understandable element of his broad appeal) presents him with a further difficulty. Given his limited imaginative leverage on his central figure, if happiness writes white, goodness may end up with grey. Faced with the scale of his ambitions, Faulks, one senses, may have hesitated — as his heroine would not.

If you order Charlotte Gray at the publisher's price of £16.99, Culture-Shop will include free a paperback edition of The Girl At The Lion d'Or



From *rimu* to *rangatiratanga*, many Maori words make it into the new Oxford New Zealand dictionary

Word in a new chum's ear

Emily Perkins

The Oxford Dictionary of New Zealand English
ed Harry Orsman
Oxford 966pp £90

A RECENT cartoon in London's Evening Standard depicted a prisoner in a dungeon inquiring of his guard, "Why do they call it the Encyclopaedia Britannica?" To which the guard responds, with lightning wit, "Would you buy the Encyclopaedia Aboriginee?" That is it — that is the joke, which manages to be unfunny as well as racist. And yet maybe the guard has a point. Who, aside from a few armchair anthropologists and the Aborigines themselves, is going to be interested in their encyclopaedia?

A sceptic could ask the same about the Oxford Dictionary Of New Zealand English. The result of more than 40 years' work by its editor Harry Orsman (it started life as a doctorate thesis), this is the most comprehensive record of New Zealand words and phrases to date. From *Aotearoa* to *N'yezillun* to *Zealandia*, the compilation on historical principles of 6,000 headword entries and 9,300 separate sub-entries reads as an intriguing, random overview of New Zealand's past and present.

Maori words are included with, where possible, examples of all early spellings: the *rimu* tree was also known as demo, dimu dimu, rema, remo and remu. The loan words are mostly plant names, but there are widely used phrases too, and a previously contentious word, *rangatiratanga* (the Maori version of the Treaty of Waitangi granted *tino rangatiratanga* — chiefly authority — to the Maori, but the English version made no mention of it and the authority was presumed ceded) is translated definitively here.

Whaling provides a few juicy words, happily for whales (though sadly for us) now obsolete — *shungullion* is the offal, which the tonguer might have left beside the sheerlegs after cutting-in. Whalers were followed by the settlers, *shagroons* and *squattocracy* with their *paddocks, gummies* and *cowspanking*.

Goldmining, farming, sport and prison cultures have all contributed abbreviations or collocations specific to New Zealand (you don't want to be a *zero* or *kidfucker* in Parrie Max, unless you're cunning as a shithouse rat). These, needless to say, tend towards the macho, and it's a country where a milkbar cowboy has traditionally had the advantage over a pillion pussy, though neither breed survived the 1950s.

As Orsman writes in his introduction, "Pioneer immigrants . . . had to cope with 'bush', 'creek' and 'gully' replacing 'woods,' 'brook' and 'vale'." The New Zealand words sound harsher, wilder — this is not a place for *sooks*.

Orsman and his researchers have trawled letters, journals, newspapers and countless books of fiction and non-fiction to support the entries with 47,000 quotations. Newspapers are much in evidence as sources, indicating the willingness of New Zealand journalism to embrace colloquialisms. A heading in Wellington's Dominion from 1995, "Police Hunt Sicko", is followed by the explanatory: "A police hunt for an 'extremely sick individual' who trashed a Whangarei woman's home and pinned her goldfish to the wall with butcher's knives continued last night."

Slang makes up a big part of the language and there has often been a paucity of written sources to support the definitions. In these instances, oral evidence may have been noted, as in "root, v. To have sexual intercourse (with). 1941 root first heard by Ed. at St Patrick's College, Silverstream".

The New Zealand words sound harsher, wilder — this is not a place for *sooks*

But it's not all as rough as guts. Literary fiction gets a fair suck of the sav, too. The quotations range from Denis Glover to Robin Hyde, Allen Curnow to Katherine Mansfield, Keri Hulme to Janet Frame — and illustrate the widespread assimilation of some Maori words as well as the influence of the elements and landscape on the language.

The respected novelist Maurice Gee, so the story goes, received some galley proofs back from his UK publishers with a particular amendment. A family which "owned a bach in the Sounds" now, thanks to the copy editor, owned "a beach in the Sounds" — a giant leap in social standing. Gee corrected the word back to bach — a small unpretentious holiday hut familiar to New Zealanders of all classes — but the finished copies went out with the family fortunes raised for ever.

The point is not that, if only publishers had had access to this dictionary before now, New Zealand novels might have been printed more accurately. It is that a small, isolated country has few opportunities to present its language and perspectives to the larger world: while ha[illegible] case Kiwi children may grow up eating lamingtons and eskimo pies, wearing jandals and playing at bull scrambles, they are reading about baseball and pumpkin pie and snow at Christmas.

Fine — all part of acquiring curiosity about the world, and usually culminates in an Overseas Experience. But there is also a satisfaction in imagining that a non-New Zealand reader might be sent to the dictionary to decipher exactly what is meant by "rip, shit or bust" — though it might be self-explanatory. The Oxford Dictionary Of New Zealand English is a fascinating document, a thorough and accessible guide.

If there is any disappointment, it is the absence of words such as *mahnis, muntah, gruts* and *ch[illegible] plus*, the meanings of which are known to any New Zealander under 40. Perhaps Orsman will include them in his forthcoming Dictionary Of New Zealand Slang.

There is the lasting question of New Zealand identity — an identity that, despite assertions of arrival ("I'm all grown up now") is still being forged and worried over in mirror-gazing like any adolescent. Will New Zealand remain "Australia's boring cousin", a place [illegible] engrossed with sheep, horses, bush etc, to come up with "high-octane linguistic innovation" as one recent editorial had it — the conservative land of "Ladies bring a plate"?

What about the romantic, uncomplicated South Sea islands, a vision only believable if you half-close your eyes and murmur like mantras words you probably do not know the meanings of: *inanga, pipi[illegible], whata, kerewai*. The staunch Man Alone hasn't loosened his grip yet though he's metamorphosed from a Harvey Keitel type who's taken the blanket to a bloke going solo in a crib, all cock and ribs like a ma[illegible]terer's dog.

Will one of these old, surely outdated incarnations of New Zealand hold true? Or, with the speed of development and openness to [illegible]ence that the Dictionary illustrates, perhaps a new language — a New Zealand English influenced by [illegible] American, urban and rural Maori, Pacific Islanders, Asian immigrants and returned travellers — will continue to develop and mutate, from the schoolyard to beyond. As [illegible] mate, you never know.

Science

Steven Poole

Life's Other Secret, by Ian Stewart (Penguin Press, £20)

WHAT do you mean, no one told you about life's first secret? Try to keep up. Life's other secret, today, is that you can write popular expositions of mathematics, recombine them with more hardcore biological information — and lo, you have a new publishing product, weirdly just as good as the others.

Spiders, petals, coral reefs — they all obey fractal or other numeric laws, which according to taste you might find surprising (so this abstract thing maths is really part of the fabric of the universe?) or not (since our brains are made of the same stuff as everything else, you could reasonably expect the maths we've created to reflect organic orders). Welcome to biomathematics.

Achilles In the Quantum Universe: The Definitive History of Infinity, by Richard Morris (Souvenir Press, £18.99)

MORRIS canters lucidly through the history of how people have tried to get to grips with infinity from Zeno onwards. Lots of fun with time, speed, black holes and quantum mechanics, and seductive questions like "Is the Universe Finite, Infinite, or Imaginary?"

The User Illusion: Cutting Consciousness Down to Size, by Tor Nørretranders (Penguin Press, £20)

PROPOSES the rather thrilling thesis that consciousness is a fraud, that it has far less to do with human life than most people think. Thought, argues Nørretranders, is [illegible]ct a process of chucking away information, and it is this detritus (happily labelled "exformation") that is crucially involved in "automatic" behaviours of expertise (riding a bike, playing the piano), and which is therefore the most precious to us as people. We should revel in not being in control. Highly provocative fun that segues into a wider cultural polemic. The so-called "Information Age", for example, is defined precisely by an increasing poverty of real knowledge.

Almost Everyone's Guide to Science, by John Gribbin (Weidenfeld, £9.99)

THIS breezy new book from the ridiculously prolific Gribbin has the distinguishing feature that it's about *all* current major fields of science: from quantum physics to chemistry to DNA to evolution to ecology to astrophysics. Gribbin wants to show the big picture, how it all fits together, with no equations to avoid scaring the nervous — a shame, since tucking equations away in footnotes or appendices, as Simon Singh and James Gleick do, always provides added value for the curious.

Not as stylish as Isaac Asimov's magisterial multi-volume Guide, but more up-to-date; less ranting than Dawkins and better pitched than Hawking. It is possible that science goes into such enormous synthetic frenzies as the present one at just those historical moments preceding a new scientific revolution. But it's like buying a computer: you can't wait around for ever until a better model appears.

One 'Nam thing after another

Lucretia Stewart

Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam
by Robert Templer
Little, Brown 384pp £18.99

THE VIETNAM war ended more than 20 years ago, but that hasn't stopped dozens of gonzo journalists indulging themselves with time-warp fantasies about Vietnam. If we are to believe most of what has been published recently about that country, the war (which the Vietnamese refer to as the "American" war) ended yesterday and was more interesting — and more fun — than any other period in Vietnamese history. For many writers, 'Nam is a state of mind and, as Templer writes, "the importance attached to Vietnam by its recent history has if anything hindered a richer understanding of the country and its people".

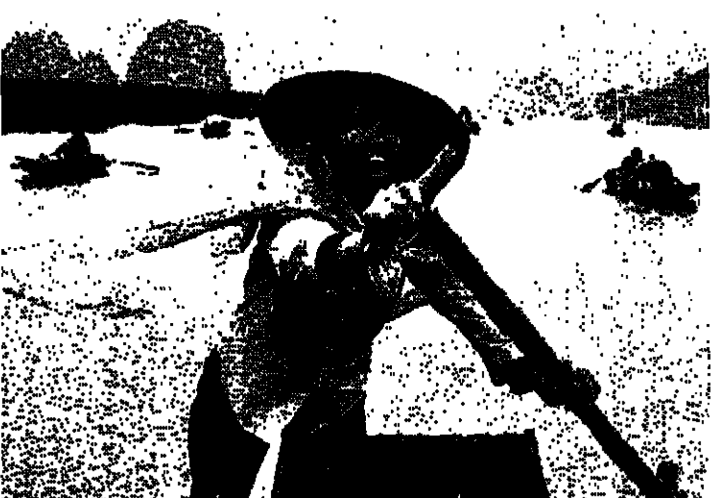
But Shadows And Wind looks set to buck the trend. Templer spent three years in Vietnam as a journalist for Agence France Presse, arriving just one week after the United States lifted its economic embargo. The result is a meticulous and fascinating investigation into the reality of life in contemporary Vietnam at a time of "optimism and recovery".

Templer examines every facet of Vietnamese life — from food to literature to Aids — and an emerging youth culture with an assurance that belies his youth (he is only 32) and the relatively short time he spent there. He confidently challenges such experts as Stanley Karnow and Frances Fitzgerald, author of Fire In The Lake, which was and is widely regarded as seminal and remains in print 25 years after its first publication. It is to his credit that he mounts a convincing challenge without sounding mean-spirited or petty — his rapid-fire attacks on lesser writers are no less pointed.

Although Shadows And Wind is a serious, scholarly book, it has its lighter moments. In a chapter entitled "Imagining Vietnam" which begins, alluringly, with the words "Larry Hillblom was in love", Templer describes the American tycoon's 1990 romance with the hill station of Dalat — which was where colonials suffering from tuberculosis or simply the heat of Saigon would go to rest in the twenties and thirties. Hillblom pumped $40 million into renovating the Dalat Palace Hotel, a wonderful thirties extravaganza. But he was killed in a plane crash near Saipan, his body was never found, and his dream hotel now languishes, virtually unoccupied.

Many of the anecdotes that Templer produces to back up his arguments have a wry, deadpan humour. Commenting on the attitudes of such anti-war activists and writers as Susan Sontag and Mary McCarthy, he writes: "McCarthy was even struck by the rareness of acne among Vietnamese youth, which she took as a sign of a higher moral existence." The book is studded with such gems.

Sadly, by the time Templer left Hanoi last year, the "optimism and recovery" had been replaced by "a climate of disappointment and impatience". For anyone interested in the real legacy of the Vietnam war, this book should be compulsory reading.



Downstream of war: an age of 'optimism and recovery'

Don't cry for me, Filipinos

Ian Thomson

America's Boy: The Marcoses and the Philippines
by James Hamilton-Paterson
Granta 462pp £20

IMELDA MARCOS, the glitzy Filipina First Lady, wore bullet-proof bras and craved Heinz sandwich spread. This was not just a champagne-and-foie-gras sort of despot. Her husband, with his rockabilly pompadour and Southeast Asian superman image, was no less remarkable. His 20-year rule was squandered in pursuit of goons, guns and gold (the three Gs of Filipino politics) as well as cultivating an extra-long thumbnail.

It would take a Freddie Mercury to invent such a glam, outrageously camp conjugal dictatorship. As Imelda gushed: "I was like a sex act all the time, a love act. He [Ferdinand] thought of it, I implemented it." Imelda's allure was notoriously potent. In 1966 she unhinged President Johnson. "I'm being groped by this guy, darling," Imelda whispered to her husband at a Washington function. "Ignore it, Meldy," Ferdie replied through clenched teeth. "It's in a good cause." Allegedly LBJ was only dancing.

1986 was a bad year for dictators. On February 7, Baby Doc fled from Haiti. Two weeks later the Marcoses were airlifted out of Manila. Both Haiti and the Philippines had been (indeed still are) American puppet states. The television cameras showed us Haiti's abandoned national palace with its vulgar red plush and tell-tale projector in the presidential bedroom. (Like Baby Doc, the Marcoses had a penchant for porn.) Along with her shoes, Imelda left behind industrial-sized bottles of Dior and Guerlain perfume. Journalists were shown her glitter-ball disco, as well as the catering jars of sandwich spread.

The most prominent British journalist to cover the Manila coup was the poet James Fenton. Yet Fenton is pointedly absent from this superdetailed account of the Marcoses and the Philippines, America's Boy. Why? For almost 20 years the author James Hamilton-Paterson has lived in a remote Philippine village, and I think he resents new boys on the block. Hamilton-Paterson is by far the strangest and most reserved of British literary exiles. America's Boy is distinguished by a deep understanding of Filipino history and culture. It's a riveting read and, as always with Hamilton-Paterson, superbly written.

It is 12 years since the Marcoses were deposed. Hamilton-Paterson is particularly keen to set the record straight over Imelda. Even her most bizarre foibles, he believes, were rooted in Filipino tradition. Famously, Imelda allowed herself to be duped by a psychic medium called the Bionic Boy, yet he was only a larger-than-life version of the village shamans that crowd Southeast Asia. Eventually the Bionic Boy was chucked out of the Palace for (accurately) predicting the date of his patron's overthrow.

As the self-styled holy mother of the poor and glamorous demagogue, Imelda had much in common with Evita Peron. However, Hamilton-Paterson doesn't make this comparison. Imelda practised the same sort of authoritarian populism. The Argentine wore the dresses and jewels of the Manila upper classes ("Oh look! Those are real diamonds Mrs Marcos has sewn on her dress!" twittered Brooke Shields), yet she built new homes for abused girls and hospitals for the poor. Evita was scorned by the Buenos Aires élite; Imelda was despised by snooty Manileños as a sluttish gold digger. Imelda wanted to become the Madonna of the Filipino dispossessed and her fanciful collection of speeches, The Compassionate Society, was required reading in the nation's schools. Imelda never dressed down for the poor, and this too was pure Evita. It won't be long before Lloyd-Webber turns the Filipina into a musical.

Hamilton-Paterson, who has met Imelda, claims there was real substance beneath the glitz. Her mere physical presence, he says, "brought atrophied libidos out of long hibernation, peeping shyly forth like rabbit noses in spring". Blimey! Is the author speaking for himself? America's Boy provides an excellent account of US involvement in the Philippines. Just as Washington used Haiti as a bulwark against Castro's Communist Cuba, so it used the Philippines as a strategic defence against red Vietnam. Ferdinand Marcos, a wily bird, enjoyed unreserved American support until his excesses became an embarrassment even to Ronald Reagan. For Hamilton-Paterson, Ferdinand's crony capitalism was no less dubious than the US state department's meddling in Filipino affairs.

Eventually, though, the US ordered his removal at the hands of Corazon Aquino and the spookily named Cardinal Sin. Baby Doc and his distinctly Imeldaesque wife Michele, were also toppled with the help of Uncle Sam.

President Marcos was not a bloodthirsty tyrant, and his corruption was wildly exaggerated by the West. Yet he did reduce the Philippines to penury. The mid-seventies saw a great migrant army of nationals leave the islands to find work abroad. The sight of thousands of Filipinos eating pizza outside Rome's bus terminus is truly startling. Housemaids, cleaners, babysitters, skivvies; their meeting is a weekly ritual practised in other cities around the world.

America's Boy is brimful of beautifully transparent prose, vignettes of Filipino village life mingling with intensely personal reflections and insight. James Hamilton-Paterson has been here before, notably with his Grand Guignol thriller Ghosts Of Manila. But this book is a real glory; nothing more can usefully be said about the Philippines: it's all here, and wonderfully.



A hole lot of trouble

Paul Evans

UP IN the woods the first ochre hints of autumn flash through beech, elm and hazel. In the hedges the elder appear stained with the juice of their dark purple berries. Many people find this an inspirational time of year, a time of creative energy which may stem from a more ancient response to seasonal change. This is the season of "mellow fruitfulness" when we mammals bulk up for winter. For the wild ones it's not so mellow. It's a serious business, and the energy which they apply to food gathering is every bit as creative as our own.

Grey squirrels race along their aerial runways in a frenetic shoplifting spree for hazelnuts and beechmast. Mice and voles make furtive raids from wood's edge into the fields to snaffle up ears of wheat. There is one animal whose mighty appetite propels it to take more extreme gastronomic risks to prepare for leaner times ahead.

One morning, at the top of the woods where I'd kept a watchful eye on a small hole in the bank which led into a wasp nest, there was a square-shaped excavation. This had been neatly and powerfully dug, right into the heart of a very large nest. The insides of the intricately built paper walls were visible but everything else had gone — this had to be the work of a badger. Who else could sustain an attack from an entire wasps' nest and get away with eating its contents of grubs and stored food?

I could see how the badger's fur would protect it from stings, but how it managed to protect its eyes and nose was impressive. This was the second such excavation I'd seen in this vicinity and it was obvious that this badger had perfected a valuable, if dangerous, skill. My guess is that the badger had struck in a pre-dawn raid when the wasps were dozy.

They were certainly wide awake now and very pissed off. I was lucky that my few seconds of curiosity only earned me one major sting, and I had to leg it through the woods, chased by an irate posse of wasps hell-bent on revenge.

A few hundred yards from the wasps' nest excavation, in the corner of a field, the still unharvested wheat crop was trampled down. On inspection there was a series of excavations, but these ones had been filled. This was a badger's territorial latrine, many holes filled with turds of fairly epic proportions.

Despite legal protection from mindless persecution in the past and a change in social attitudes which has seen the badger become an icon of nature conservation, brock's in big trouble. In what reads like a Biblical pronouncement, the Government proposes to cull badgers in an experiment to stop the spread of bovine tuberculosis in cattle. The Government's stated figure of 10,000 badgers to be gassed is, according to some commentators, more likely to be 22,000.

The argument about badgers and TB in cattle is a well travelled path which, for decades, has got nowhere. The human health hazard from tuberculosis in badgers is negligible, and the link between the disease in badgers and in cattle has always been contentious.

The sceptic in me suspects the Government of trying to appease an ailing agricultural industry by sacrificing thousands of one species of wild animal. An awful price to pay for a scientific "experiment" and a sop to the farmers. This time the badger's dug into a political wasps' nest for which it has no defences, except perhaps public support.


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Chess Leonard Barden

GARRY KASPAROV'S $2 million title defence against Spain's Alexei Shirov is in the deep freeze after the world champion admitted that the province of Andalusia, which was due to sponsor the 18-game series, had withdrawn because of "political problems". As part of a voting deal, the ruling Socialists handed over the sports ministry, which was to provide the prize fund, to their nationalist partners, who promptly cancelled the chess project.

Kasparov took a 3-1 lead last week in his $100,000 six-game Euro-Tel Trophy match against Jan Timman in Prague, intended to prepare him for the now aborted series against Shirov. The latest events are a fresh blow to his campaign to keep personal control of the world title, and they maintain Kasparov's track record as a chess serial killer. His "World Chess Council", already dubbed World Chess Cancelled, looks destined to follow the GMA, the PCA, and several other ex-Kasparov groups into oblivion.

Meanwhile the International Chess Federation (Fide) has contracted with the USCF and the American firm Fishman Associates to organise a $2.6 million, 100-player knock-out world championship in Las Vegas, starting on November 29.

Timman v Kasparov, 2nd game

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 A surprise for the occasion. Kasparov often tries to beat Timman as Black, but the King's Indian has been his preferred weapon. **3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 e3** Over-respect for his opponent's preparation; 5 a4 is the main line to stop Black holding the b5 pawn.

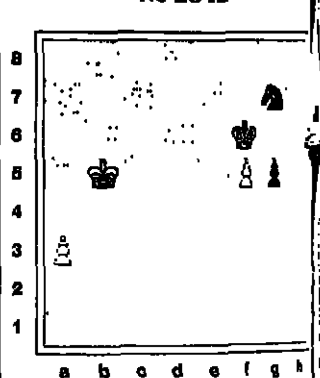
b5 6 a4 b4 7 Nb1 Also artificial. After 7 Na2 Black usually returns the pawn. **Ba6 8 Qc2?!** Conceding two tempi to entice the pawn to b3 is slow. **b3 9 Qd1 e6 10 Be2 c5!** Given his chance, Kasparov strikes in the centre. **11 0-0 Nc6 12 Ne5 Rc8 13 Na3 cxd4 14 Naxc4 Qd5 15 Bf3** 15 Nd6+ Bxd6 16 Bxa6 Qxe5 17 f4 Qc5 18 exd4 looks a better defence.

Ne4 16 Nxc6 Rxc6 17 Nd2 **18 Re1 d3** And now we have a classic case of the passed pawn's lust to expand, as Kasparov controls the board while Timman's pieces scramble desperately on the back rank to stop d2 and touchdown.

19 Nxb3 e5 20 Bd2 Rb6 Bxe4 fxe4 22 Nc1 Rxb2 23 [illegible] d2! 24 Rf1 Or 24 Bxb2 dxe1Q+ Qxe1 Bb4 26 Qxb4 Qd1+ and mates. **Bxf1 23 Bxb2 Bc4 26 Ne2 [illegible] 27 Nc3 Bxd1 28 Nxd5 Bb3 [illegible] Nc3 Bb4 30 Nd1 0-0! 31 [illegible] signs.**

An elegant finish, which the sporting Timman doubtless foresaw and played into for the enjoyment of chess fans worldwide. If 31 Bx[illegible] Rc8 32 Bb2 Bxd1 33 Rxd1 Rc2 wins at least the bishop.

No 2542



Russian veteran Yuri Averbakh, a grandmaster, an authority on endgames, and a prolific writer. An expectant crowd gathered when he reached this week's diagram in a simultaneous display. If both sides simply push pawns the game is drawn, but Averbakh (White to move) has a problem in holding the black knight since if 1 a4 N[illegible] a5 g4 3 a6 Nc7+ and Black wins.

The GM's opponent and expert spectators all predicted a white defeat and were astonished when Averbakh found a way to draw. What happened?

No 2541: 1 Be5 Kxe5 2 Nxf5 K[illegible] 3 Rd5 mate.

Quick crossword no. 437

Across

1 Encroach (8)
5 Pirate gull (4)
9 Implied (5)
10 Determined (7)
11 Regular muscle exercising (4,8)
13 Drift (6)
14 Water diviner (6)
17 Loving (12)
20 Huge (7)
21 Feather (5)
22 Naked (4)
23 Normal — colours? (8)

Down

1 Carry — a betting system (4)
2 Contain (7)
3 Stealing below a set value (5,7)
4 Standing — position (6)
6 Dust coloured (5)
7 Forerunner of helicopter (8)
8 A Biro (9,3)
12 Wolf-like dog (8)
15 Fruit with loose rind (7)
16 Aim — straight (6)
18 Renowned (5)
19 Guide — senior counsel (4)

Last week's solution

BAIT BIRTHDAY
A M G H I E
COPE INCIDENT
K O P O R T I
BALUSTRADE
O I Y E W D T
NOTICE POLISH
E E H E R S R
CONVALESCE
S A P O D U A
CULPABLE CAST
U A T V D E
MISCHIEF KEEN

Bridge Zia Mahmood

TWO new names have been added to the roster of World Champions — and these two aren't as easy to pronounce as some of the others. Michal Kwiecien and Jacek Pszczola of Poland won the World Pairs Championship in Lille, France, earlier this month, overtaking the great American pair of Larry Cohen and Dave Berkowitz on the last round of the competition to carry off the title.

Two new champions — and one old one. Britain's only medal at the World Championships came in the Seniors Pairs, when Boris Schapiro and Irving "Haggis" Gordon led the field virtually throughout and took the gold in convincing style. To be a Senior at bridge, you need to be over 55 — Boris is 89, or so he will admit if you ask him. This was Boris's fourth world title — he was a member of the only British team ever to win the Bermuda Bowl in 1955, he won the World Mixed Teams championship in 1962, and he won an "unofficial" world championship (because the World Bridge Federation did not exist at that time) in 1938! I cannot believe that there is any other sport at which a player has won world titles 61 years apart. If there is, let me know.

Boris still plays regularly at TGR's, where his skills and his temperament make him a greatly feared opponent and an even more greatly feared partner. He is never afraid to back his judgment, and his table presence often enables him to steer his way out of tight corners. On this deal from the World Championship, he exhibited this quality in full measure. What would you do as South with his uninspiring collection of cards?

♠Q95 ♥10932 ♦85 ♣QJ65

This is the bidding, with your side at favourable vulnerability:

South Boris	West	North	East
			2♥(1)
Pass	3♣(2)	Dble(3)	3♦
Pass	4♥	Dble(4)	Pass
?			

(1) Showing a weakish hand with hearts and a minor.
(2) An artificial inquiry bid.
(3) Showing a club suit.
(4) Showing a good hand, primarily a takeout double.

Boris bid four spades at this point! When it was doubled by West, he removed briskly, to five clubs, also doubled. This was the full deal:

North
♠AKJ10
♥None
♦K62
♣K97432

West
♠8643
♥K765
♦Q1074
♣A

East
♠72
♥AQJ8[illegible]
♦AJ93
♣108

South
♠Q95
♥10932
♦85
♣QJ65

Four hearts doubled would have made in some comfort, so Boris had already done well to take out his partner's double. West led a heart, which Boris ruffed in dummy. A club was led to the queen and West's singleton ace. A diamond switch was dangerous from West's point of view, because South might have ♦Jx, so West exited "passively" with a spade. Of course this enabled Boris to get rid of his losing diamond on dummy's fourth spade, so the five clubs "sacrifice" was made.

Football Premiership: Arsenal 3 Manchester United 0

Gunners prove a class act

David Lacey at Highbury

ARSENAL made it abundantly clear to Manchester United on Sunday that the title is merely on loan to Highbury until Old Trafford wants it back. Showing signs of the form which brought the club a second Double last season, Arsène Wenger's team brushed past a listless, shapeless United side to repeat their 3-0 victory of the FA Charity Shield.

The speed of the Frenchman, Nicolas Anelka, seriously exposed the slowness on the turn of Jaap Stam. But while Anelka scored Arsenal's second goal on the stroke of half-time, Tony Adams having given them an early lead, it was largely his profligacy combined with some excellent saves from Peter Schmeichel, which spared United an even heavier defeat.

To add to Alex Ferguson's discomfort, Nicky Butt was sent off for the second time in successive matches. Four days earlier Butt had been shown a red card at Old Trafford after handling a goalbound Barcelona shot in front of the United net; now he was dismissed by Graham Barber for bringing down Vieira on the edge of the penalty area seven minutes into the second half.

The referee decided that this was serious foul play which denied the Arsenal man a scoring opportunity. However, the fact that Stam had been in a position to make an interception had Vieira stayed on his feet made the decision a harsh one. Even the Arsenal manager said he would not have argued if Butt had merely received a caution.

From the outset the briskness of Arsenal's passing and tackling looked like bringing them their fourth successive win against United. Dennis Bergkamp's form might be fitful just now but he still produced the touches to open up space in the opposing defence. The opening goal arrived in the 14th minute after Jesper Blomqvist had fouled Lee Dixon on the right. Stephen Hughes's well-flighted free-kick found Adams leaving Keane and rising above Stam to head past Schmeichel.

Had United kept the score to 1-0 at half-time they might have been able to salvage something from the game. But in the 45th minute Marc Overmars's through-lob found Anelka spinning away from Stam to score at the second attempt, Schmeichel having saved his initial shot feet-first.

Butt's departure ended the game as a contest and when Anelka, this time put through by Bergkamp, shot wide that seemed to be that. Then Wenger brought on his latest signing, Fredrik Ljungberg, and within five minutes of coming off the bench the young Swede, set up by Overmars and Ray Parlour, had looped Arsenal's third goal high past Schmeichel.


Blomqvist eludes Bergkamp at Highbury PHOTO: PAUL HACKETT

Results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Arsenal 3, Man Utd 0; Coventry 1, Newcastle 5; Derby Co 2, Leicester 0; Leeds 0, Aston Villa 0; Liverpool 3, Charlton 3; Middlesbro 2, Everton 2; Nottm For 0, West Ham 0; Southmptn 1, Tottenham 1; Wimbldon 2, Sheff Wed 1; Blackburn 3, Chelsea 4.

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE:
First Division:
Barnsley 4, C Palace 0; Birmnghm 0, Grimsby 1; Bury 0, Tranmere 0, Crewe 4, Bolton 4; Huddrsfld 2, Wolves 1; Ipswich 3, Bristol City 1; Port Vale 0, Portsmouth 2; QPR 2, Stockport 0; Sheff Utd 2, Norwich 1; Sundrland 7, Oxford 0; Swindon 1, Watford 4; West Brom 0, Bradford C 2

Second Division:
Blackpool 1, Luton 0; Bristol R 3, Lincoln 0; Fulham 3, York 3, Gillingham 2, Burnley 1; Man City 1, Chesterfield 1; Millwall 2, Northmptn 1; Oldham 0, Preston 1; Reading 1, Colchester 1; Wigan 2, Macclesfield 0; Wrexham 0, Stoke 1; Wycombe 0, Bournmouth 2.

Third Division:
Cardiff 2, Rochdale 1; Carlisle 1, Chester 1; Darlington 1, Shrewsbury 0; Exeter 1, Barnet 0, Hull 1, Halifax 2; Leyton O 1, Brighton 0, Peterboro 0, Plymouth 2, Rotherhm 3, Hartlepool 0; Scarboro 3, Brentford 1; Scunthrpe 3, Mansfield 2; Southend 0, Cambridge 1; Torquay 1, Swansea 1.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Premier League:
Dundee 2, Dundee U 2, Dunfrmline 1, Hearts 1. Motherwell 0, Kilmarnock 0; Rangers 0, Celtic 0; St Johnstn 2, Aberdeen 0.

Division One:
Ayr 7, Stranraer 1, Falkirk 0, Airdrie 1, Morton 0, St Mirren 1, Hamilton 1, Clydebank 2; Hibernian 3, Raith 1

Division Two:
Arbroath 0, Alloa 2, Clyde 1, Livingston 1, East Fife 1, Partick 3, Queen of S 3, Forfar 0, Stirling A 0, Inverness CT 1

Division Three:
Albion 1, Brechin 4, Berwick 1, East Stirling 2, Dumbrtn 5, Cowdnbeath 0, Montrose 1, Queens Pk 0; Ross Co 0, Stenhsemuir 1

Sports Diary Mike Kiely

RFU risks confrontation over Lions

THE BRITISH Lions could become an endangered species as a confrontation looms between the Rugby Football Union and the rest of the home unions over the team's tour schedule. The RFU is in favour of reducing the frequency of tours, from every four years to every six, because of the reluctance on the part of the English clubs to release their players for international duty. "It is hard for England to pursue its own development programme when two out of every four years are taken up by the World Cup and a Lions tour," said the RFU director of rugby, Don Rutherford.

Not surprisingly, the Scottish, Welsh and Irish governing bodies are less than happy with the attitude of their colleagues at Twickenham, and their position was summed up by former Lions coach Ian McGeechan: "In New Zealand and South Africa, the Lions are regarded as a bigger team than any other country. As Lions our best players gain immensely from competing in such a intimidating and challenging environment."

Whatever the outcome of the RFU's management committee meeting next month, it is understood that the Lions's 2001 tour to New Zealand and Australia will not be affected.

MIKE Tyson was ordered to undergo psychiatric evaluation by the Nevada State Athletic Commission before a decision is made whether he should be given back his boxing licence.

The former world heavyweight champion, who was banned from the sport after biting off part of Evander Holyfield's ear during their title bout last year, told the meeting in Las Vegas that he would refrain from such conduct in the future, but clearly the commissioners believe they need more evidence of Tyson's mental fitness before letting him back in the ring.

Holyfield, who retained his International Boxing Federation title after knocking down Vaughn Bean in Atlanta, believes Tyson should be reinstated. "He paid the price for what he did in the ring," he said.

FORMULA One supremo Bernie Ecclestone has admitted he is involved in moves by the Italian company Media Partners to set up a European football super league. "I think a super league is a great idea. I don't know much about football, at least not as much as I know about motor racing, but I do think it is necessary and I do think it will work," Ecclestone said.

Uefa, European football's governing body, has set up a taskforce charged with plotting the future course of the game to placate the Continent's richest clubs, tempted by vastly increased TV revenue from a new league. Uefa had hoped its move would remove the threat to its authority from predatory operators, but Media Partners is still actively courting the European élite.

Meanwhile the existing European competitions got under way again, bringing mixed fortunes for British clubs. In the Champions League, Arsenal and Manchester United both drew, the Gunners 1-1 away to Lens and United 3-3 at Old Trafford against Barcelona.

Cup Winners' Cup holders Chelsea won the first leg of their first-round tie against Helsingborgs 1-0, while Newcastle United took a 2-1 lead against Partizan Belgrade. In the Uefa Cup there were first-leg wins for Aston Villa, Liverpool, Leeds and Celtic. Rangers drew while Blackburn lost 1-0 at home to Lyon.

Full-time professional referees and video replays to rule on controversial goals are to be introduced by the Premier League in time for next season. Philip Don, referees' officer, said that the changes would come into force on an experimental basis.

BRITISH number one Tim Henman retained the President's Cup, defeating Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia 7-5, 6-4 in Tashkent. In Geneva Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Conchita Martinez led Spain to their fifth Federation Cup title, defeating world number one Martina Hingis and Patty Schnyder of Switzerland 6-0, 6-2 in the decisive doubles match of the final.

FLORENCE Griffith Joyner, a triple gold medallist at the 1988 Olympics, died of an apparent heart attack in Mission Viejo, California. She was 38. The former United States sprinter, who was noted for her colourful running attire as well as her speed, still holds the world record at 100m and 200m. Though she failed no drugs tests, Flo-Jo's stunning physical improvement in 1988 prompted suggestions that she had been using banned substances. She retired from the track four months after the Seoul Games.

AT the Catalan motorcycling Grand Prix, second-placed Michael Doohan of Australia was awarded maximum points after race winner Max Biaggi of Italy was disqualified for ignoring a yellow flag following a crash on the course. The revised result saw Doohan's Honda team-mate, Tadayuki Okada of Japan, take the runners-up spot, with Norick Abe on a Yamaha in third.

Cricket

Fiery Foxes run the title to earth

Vic Marks at The Oval

IN THE end the calculators could be tossed away. Leicestershire won the County Championship in the most emphatic fashion by thrashing a desolate Surrey side by an innings and 211 runs.

The Leicestershire players knew they had secured the title when they captured the wicket of Ian Salisbury at 11.51 on Saturday morning, but they ensured that they could spend an evening of undiluted celebration by bowling Surrey out a second time as dusk approached 6.30.

Joining Phil Simmons on the balcony was club captain Jimmy Whitaker, and quite right too. Whitaker guided Leicestershire to the title in 1996 from on the field, creating alongside the coach Jack Birkenshaw unshakeable self-belief and mutual trust among this band of young cricketers.

Theirs has been a magnificent achievement from a county that has gone virtually unnoticed this season — not least, they suspect, by the selectors — and with no fixed captain. Leicestershire have remained unbeaten throughout the season. No one can quibble that they deserve the pennant.

Birkenshaw, a coach who scorns too much use of the clip-boards and computer print-outs, highlighted the greatest single asset of the side. "They all really enjoy the game; it's never a drudge for them; they like practising; they like playing; they look forward to coming to the ground each day; they don't need motivating."

At Old Trafford, Lancashire secured second place by defeating Hampshire by 161 runs. Wasim Akram's side, who finished 15 points behind Leicestershire, needed only 10 overs on the final day to capture the last two Hampshire wickets and secure their highest finish since 1987, when they were runners-up.

● In Toronto, Aamir Sohail struck an unbeaten 97 to lead Pakistan to a five-wicket win over India and complete a 4-1 victory in the Sahara Cup limited-overs series.

Final table

	P	W	L	D	Bt	Bl	Pts
Leics (10)	17	11	0	6	47	61	292
Lancs (11)	17	11	1	5	30	56	277
Yorks (6)	17	9	3	5	47	63	269
Gloucs (7)	17	11	5	1	23	65	267
Surrey (8)	17	10	5	2	38	57	261
Hants (14)	17	6	5	6	27	61	202
Sussex (18)	17	6	7	4	30	63	201
Warks (4)	17	6	8	3	35	60	200
Som (12)	17	6	7	4	30	54	192
Derbys (16)	17	6	7	4	28	55	191
Kent (2)	17	6	5	7	18	59	178
Worcs (3)	17	4	6	7	32	59	176
Glam (1)	17	4	6	7	36	55	176
Durham (17)	17	3	9	5	30	65	158
Nortnts (15)	17	4	5	8	31	52	148
Notts (13)	17	3	10	4	20	60	140
Middx (4)	17	2	9	6	28	52	130
Essex (8)	17	2	11	4	16	58	116

1997 positions in brackets

